

Decoding the Subtext

*Being an examination of the homoerotic subtext
contained within the Sherlock Holmes Canon*

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Introduction

Decoding the Subtext is a series of essays which examine each of the Sherlock Holmes stories for homoerotic subtext. Here, the author suggests that Holmes and Watson were more than mere friends, and attempts to prove this theory by examining the sub-textual evidence contained within Canon.

It should be noted that this series was written while reading Baring-Gould's annotated Sherlock Holmes. As such, the stories have been examined in the order suggested by Baring-Gould's chronology. Newcomers to Sherlock Holmes should first read Canon in publication order, before moving on to Baring-Gould's chronology. Baring-Gould's dates, as well as publication dates, have been noted.

The Gloria Scott

Dates:

The Gloria Scott was, by all accounts, Holmes' first case. Baring-Gould dates the case in the summer/fall of 1874 (seven years prior to Holmes meeting Watson). The story is told in retrospect, Baring-Gould suggesting a date in the winter of 1887 or 1888 for the re-telling. The Gloria Scott was first published in April of 1893.

Synopsis:

In The Adventure of the Gloria Scott, Holmes spends a month with a college friend at his friend's father's estate. Here, the story of a long forgotten ship, the Gloria Scott, its convict passengers bound for Australia, and its mutinous crew first comes to light. This is the first occasion where Holmes realizes that perhaps his powers of deduction (which were once a mere hobby) might provide for an actual career.

The Subtext:

The Gloria Scott introduces a figure of Holmes' past; a man by the name of Victor Trevor, whom Holmes refers to as a close friend. It should be noted that Trevor is the only friend Holmes mentions in association with his time at University. Here we must examine Holmes' introduction to Trevor, for the entire situation (not to mention the dialogue) is very suggestive.

"You never heard me talk of Victor Trevor?" he asked. "He was the only friend I made during the two years I was at college. I was never a very sociable fellow, Watson, always rather fond of moping in my rooms and working out my own little methods of thought, so that I never mixed much with the men of my year. Bar fencing and boxing I had few athletic tastes, and then my line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows, so that we had no points of contact at all. Trevor was the only man I knew, and that only through the accident of his bull terrier freezing on to my ankle one morning as I went down to chapel.

"It was a prosaic way of forming a friendship, but it was effective. I was laid by the heels for ten days, but Trevor used to come in to inquire after me. At first it was only a minute's chat, but soon his visits lengthened, and before the end of the term we were close friends. He was a hearty, full-blooded fellow, full of spirits and energy, the very opposite to me in most respects, but we had some subjects in common, and it was a bond of union when I found

that he was as friendless as I. Finally, he invited me down to his father's place at Donithorpe, in Norfolk, and I accepted his hospitality for a month of the long vacation.

Understandably, male-male friendships in the Victorian era were considerably different than they are today. To begin with, it wasn't until 1905 (when Freud first put forth the idea of sexuality as a form of identity) that close male-male friendships (often referred to as romantic friendships --although, this term was often reserved for close female-female friendships) began to disappear. The concept of homosexuality existed before this time, but affection between two men was not considered a sign of latent homosexuality (as it would be today).

Still, the formation of this friendship (between Holmes and Trevor) has an unusual progression, which suggests the potential development of a romantic relationship, rather than a platonic one. To begin with, their encounters occur alone, behind closed doors, and they progress, from 'minutes' chats' to 'lengthened visits', suggesting the build up of something more intimate.

Then, there is the manner in which Holmes describes Trevor. Holmes uses words such as 'full-blooded' and 'filled with spirits and energy', implying something of a physical, rather than an emotional, exchange.

The increasing intimacy between the two men cumulate into a month long visit with Trevor's family, something that, again, suggests an extremely close bond.

The visit does not go well, but the two part on amiable, but certainly less genial terms, than before. Still, seven weeks later, Trevor requests Holmes' presence, and Holmes 'drops everything' to rush to Trevor's side.

It is interesting to note here that this is the first time Holmes mentions Trevor to Watson, implying that their friendship has not been sustained. In fact, neither Watson, nor the reader, hears of Trevor again, suggesting that the two parted ways sometime after the completion of the Gloria Scott case. This ending is far more suggestive of a break-up than the disintegration of a friendship. It occurs rather suddenly, and Holmes mentions, several times during his narrative, the discomfort he experienced in the tail end of his visit, Holmes cutting his visit short due in large part to this awkwardness.

It is telling, too, that Holmes does share this with Watson. At this point, using Baring-Gould's chronology, Holmes and Watson have been living together for some 7-8 years. In all that time, Trevor has not been mentioned (implying that Holmes no longer keeps in touch with his only college friend), except on this one occasion. Here, Holmes does not mention him in passing. In fact, Holmes shares the entire incident,

as well as his previously close association with Trevor, in precise detail.

When you consider how long Watson has been requesting the details of Holmes' past, it is highly interesting that Holmes would have waited so long to share this particular case. There is no reason for the case itself to remain hidden, and yet Holmes waited, years upon years, before revealing its nature, and the characters involved.

But share it he did, and this is very suggestive of a close, intimate relationship between Holmes and Watson.

It should be pointed out that we are not suggesting that Trevor was Holmes' first lover (although it is certainly probable). This is completely unsubstantiated. But it is highly probable that their relationship marked a turning point for Holmes, as prior to his friendship with Trevor, Holmes appeared to be (from what little we know) a highly recluse individual. There is no indication that Holmes cumulated any close friendships prior to Trevor, nor is there any indication that he formed any close friendships after Trevor (until Watson, that is). He maintains several acquaintances, and professional peers, but no close friends. Again, this implies that perhaps Trevor (like Watson) was a good deal closer to Holmes (or meant something more to Holmes) than a mere friend. Whether this relationship contained a sexual element is unknown, but it certainly contained an emotional one.

Outside of Holmes' relationship with Trevor, the story itself presents several elements that could be considered homoerotic in nature. I refer of course to the tale of Trevor Sr., who, when referring to the origins of the Gloria Scott, referred to the man responsible for the mutiny in the following manner:

The man next to me, upon the aft side, was one whom I had particularly noticed when we were led down the quay. He was a young man with a clear, hairless face, a long, thin nose, and rather nutcracker jaws. He carried his head very jauntily in the air, had a swagging style of walking, and was, above all else, remarkable for his extraordinary height. I don't think any of our heads would have come up to his shoulder, and I am sure that he could not have measured less than six and a half feet. It was strange among so many sad and weary faces to see one which was full of energy and resolution. The sight of it was to me like a fire in a snowstorm. I was glad, then, to find that he was my neighbour, and gladder still when, in the dead of the night, I heard a whisper close to my ear, and found that he had managed to cut an opening in the board which separated us.

Again, it should be noted that the Victorian language differs significantly from modern English, and yet, there is something highly suggestive in referring to someone as

though they were a fire in a snowstorm. The Victorians were a very repressed people, and yet they often communicated their desires and lust through thinly veiled wording; as it would have been considered quite improper to display these emotions through action. The above paragraph is a clear example of Victorian subterfuge.

It is also interesting to note that this is one of the few cases where Holmes refers to Watson using the title, 'Doctor'. Victorian formality, being what it was, placed a lot of emphasis on a person's title. There are very few occasions of Victorians referring to one another by their given (i.e. Christian), names and even the use of surnames were limited to close association. Under normal circumstances (even informal ones) a title was given (Dr. Watson, Mr. Holmes, etc.), and yet close friends would refer to one another by their surnames. It is notable, then, that here Holmes addresses Watson solely by his title, perhaps as a way to distance himself from the personal nature of the memory he has just shared.

The Musgrave Ritual

Dates:

The Musgrave Ritual is another of Holmes' earlier cases (again, pre-Watson). Baring-Gould dates the case in the fall of 1879, suggesting that it was recounted to Watson during the same year as The Gloria Scott (possibly some months later). The Musgrave Ritual was first published in May of 1893.

Synopsis:

In The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual, Holmes recounts one of the first cases that came his way after he'd established a consulting detective practice. In this story, an old university acquaintance (Reginald Musgrave) seeks Holmes' aid in unravelling the mystery of his missing butler and maid. The key to the case turns out to be an ancient family ritual, passed down from father to son through countless generations. In order to find the whereabouts of the butler, Holmes must unlock this mystery, and in doing so, discovers a long lost relic of historical significance.

The Subtext:

The story opens, as many stories do, with Holmes and Watson sitting beside the fire in their shared apartments in Baker Street. This is a particularly domestic scene, in which Watson assumes the role of a frustrated housewife, irritated by his husband's lack of order and cleanliness. Indeed, Watson goes so far as to nag Holmes to tidy his clutter, to which Holmes agrees, though he quickly manages to distract Watson by giving Watson something that he wants: an account of one of Holmes' prior cases.

"Yes, my boy, these were all done prematurely before my biographer had come to glorify me."

There are two points of interest in the above quoted line that must be considered. The first is the terminology Holmes uses to address Watson. It should be pointed out that this is not the first time (nor the last) that Holmes refers to Watson as 'my'. There are several incidences of 'my boy', 'my Watson', 'my Boswell' and 'my biographer' seen throughout Canon. The 'my' is very indicative of Holmes' possessive nature when it comes to Watson. It is obvious here (as elsewhere) that Holmes feels as though he has some claim (ownership, if you will) over Watson, and he does not appear to hesitate in

making this fact known. In fact, one would be quite surprised if they were to count the number of times Holmes refers to Watson as his.

We next turn our attention to Holmes' appreciation of Watson's work. So often in Canon Holmes is scornful of Watson's attempts to document his cases, and yet, here, he clearly indicates that it is Watson's work that has glorified him, and indeed, made him as well known and sought after as he has become.

The exchange between the two men continues, with Holmes teasing Watson regarding the state of their rooms, and taunting him regarding the case, until he eventually abandons his mischief and recounts the tale (much to Watson's excitement).

It is notable here that, again, Holmes is sharing a distinct piece of his past, something that, until this time period, he was unwilling to do. This is a clear indication of the trust that has formed between the two men, and of Holmes' desire to share his past with his only friend and companion.

One particularly fascinating aspect of this case is the shift between the past and present. We are taken away by Holmes' story, and yet, a piece of us remains with Holmes, ensconced beside a welcoming fire, as the two men sit close together; Holmes recounting his tale, Watson listening with rapt attention.

There is something distinctly intimate in the art of storytelling, especially when said story is told in a one on one setting. This becomes particularly true when the story being told contains a personal history, as it does in this instance. Holmes, in sharing the details of his past, entrusts Watson with his history. As we mentioned above, this is a clear indication of trust, and it is important to note that, in all of Canon, no other figure in Holmes' life has elicited such trust.

This can be taken a step further when we consider the fact that Holmes must have known that Watson would write of the case, and publish it. The trust he shows here goes beyond merely telling the story and trusting Watson to listen. Holmes trusts Watson to listen, but more than that, he trusts Watson to record the tale and share it with the world, something that requires a good deal of faith.

In this instance, it is the telling of the story, rather than the story itself, that is ripe with subtext. Here, we share Watson's sense of discovery and we experience the faith and trust Holmes places in Watson. Here, too, we are privy to a glimpse of the bond between the two men; a bond that, by modern day standards, transcends a casual friendship, becoming something entirely more intimate.

A Study in Scarlet

Dates:

A Study in Scarlet is quite possibly the most pivotal story set within Canon. Not only does this story introduce Sherlock Holmes to the reader, but it also introduces Sherlock Holmes to Watson. It marks the beginning of what was to become one of the most profound and successful partnerships of all time. Baring-Gould dates the story in the winter/spring of 1881 (the case in March of '81, with the meeting occurring as early as January of '81). The story was first published in 1887, and marks the very first of what was to become an entire series of Sherlock Holmes stories.

Synopsis:

The story is divided into two parts, the first being a reprint from the reminiscences of John Watson, M.D., late of the Army Medical Department. Here, Watson describes his introduction to Sherlock Holmes, and later his introduction to the world of consulting detection as he follows Holmes' search for a killer in the very first investigation in which Watson takes part. The second half follows the story of The Country of the Saints, which establishes a motive behind the crime that takes part in the first section. For our purposes, we have ignored the second part of the story, focusing solely on Watson's reprint.

The Subtext:

The story begins with Watson, alone and lonely in the great cesspool that was London in the 1880s. He recounts his somewhat tragic past (making particular reference to the injuries he sustained while campaigning in Afghanistan). Watson, through his narrative, establishes an emotional connection with the reader, and the reader immediately feels a sense of empathy, and indeed, sympathy for the character. This is a classic romantic build-up; the broken hero, friendless and alone in one of the world's great romantic cities, struggling with his very existence, and wanting nothing more than a connection to the people who surround him.

Watson's loneliness is temporarily relieved when he meets his old dresser, Stamford, who will later facilitate one of the greatest meetings in literary history. Watson is looking for rooms, as, until this point, he has been living in a private hotel, *leading a com-*

fortless, meaningless existence.

It is Stamford who first puts forth the idea of Watson taking on a roommate, a concept that Watson is eager to embrace.

"By Jove!" I cried; "if he really wants someone to share the rooms and the expense, I am the very man for him. I should prefer having a partner to being alone."

And thus we proceed to the great meeting, and the start of what would become one of the world's most definitive love affairs (for the both the characters, and their fans).

First impressions are very telling, as they set the stage for how a relationship is destined to unfold. In this instance, it is quite obvious that Watson is immediately taken with Sherlock Holmes. Aside from his amazement at Holmes's very first deduction, *you have been in Afghanistan, I perceive*, Watson seems mesmerized by Holmes' very persona. He spends a good deal of time describing Holmes' appearance, using less than subtle language.

...greater delight could not have shone upon his features.

His eyes fairly glittered as he spoke...

The use of words like *shone* and *glittered* conjure images of a delicate, rare jewel, and it is quite remarkable to note that these are the very words that Watson uses to describe Holmes.

It is obvious, too, that Holmes made quite the first impression, as, even six years later, Watson is able to describe their first meeting in vivid detail. Indeed, many times throughout the story, Watson, perhaps due to faded memory, glosses over an event or occurrence, and yet, his introduction to Sherlock Holmes is crystal clear. The detail in which he describes their meeting is unparalleled elsewhere in Canon.

It is interesting to note, too, Holmes' reaction, for he seems quite thrilled by the prospect of sharing rooms with Watson.

Sherlock Holmes seemed delighted at the idea of sharing his rooms with me.

In fact, upon Watson agreeing to take on Holmes' as a *constant companion*, Holmes lets out a *merry laugh*, something that Holmes, we soon discover, does not often do.

Having agreed to settle the matter in the morning, Watson leaves, and yet, Holmes has already found his way into Watson's subconscious, as Watson finds himself *considerably interested in my new acquaintance*.

This interest does not wane with the passage of time, but instead grows in strength, Watson's interest in Holmes fast approaching obsession.

As the weeks went by, my interest in him and my curiosity as to his aims in life gradually

deepened and increased.

This is particularly evident in Watson's almost constant observation of Holmes; enough that he can describe, in detail, Holmes' daily activities, and his frequent shifts in mood. Watson is curious, but more than that, he is fascinated by the man he has chosen to share his home, and life, with. Holmes' demands Watson's attention, and attention Watson gives.

His very person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer.

Watson's description of Holmes is not limited to his personality. Indeed, Watson describes Holmes' physical appearance in remarkable detail, choosing to remark upon Holmes' *extraordinary delicacy of touch* and the *dreamy, vacant expression in his eyes*. Watson himself confesses *how much this man stimulated my curiosity*.

So curious does Watson become that he takes to keeping a list, marking down on paper the various aspects of Holmes' personality in an effort to figure Holmes out. This is clearly the mark of a man quite preoccupied with his fellow lodger.

The introduction continues with Watson waxing on poetically on the subject of Holmes' violin playing. It is obvious here, too, that Watson's growing affection is not one sided, as Watson mentions that Holmes frequently played *for* Watson, going so far as to *play[ing] in quick succession a whole series of my favourite airs*.

At this point, their relationship is still tentative, the two men still getting to know one another, without the eventual trust that would later form between them. The attraction and interest is obvious, but it is hesitant, mired by the need to keep up appearances, and Holmes' reluctance to lower his guard in Watson's presence.

This soon changes, however, and it is interesting to note that this occurs fairly quickly, as within weeks Watson has gone from calling Holmes his *acquaintance*, to calling him his *friend*.

As time progresses, we are provided an opportunity to see the impact their meeting had on Holmes, as Holmes recounts (months after the fact), the very first words he uttered in Watson's presence. It is clear, then, that Holmes recalls the event with some clarity.

"But do you mean to say," I said, that without leaving your room you can unravel some knot which other men can make nothing of, although they have seen every detail for themselves?"

"Quite so. I have a kind of intuition that way. Now and again a case turns up which is a

little more complex. Then I have to bustle about and see things with my own eyes. You see I have a lot of special knowledge which I apply to the problem, and which facilitates matters wonderfully. Those rules of deduction laid down in that article which aroused your scorn are invaluable to me in practical work. Observation with me is second nature. You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan."

This exchange is also indicative of Holmes' need to prove himself; to impress Watson, and indeed, he spends the better part of this chapter 'showing off', at times becoming quite defensive on the subject of his talents.

This lasts until Watson is presented with an opportunity to test Holmes' claims, and, much to Holmes' delight, Watson discovers that Holmes does indeed possess the talents he has spent the better part of the morning boasting.

"Wonderful!" I ejaculated.

"Commonplace," said Holmes, though I thought from his expression that he was pleased at my evident surprise and admiration.

It is this open admiration on the part of Watson that leads Holmes to confide in Watson. He takes it a step further, however, and decides to include Watson in the proceedings of his case; a clear indication of the growing intimacy that would soon provide the basis for the bond between them.

Watson, it should be interesting to note, does not hesitate in accompanying Holmes' on his investigation. On the contrary, he seems quite excited, not to mention touched, that Holmes has granted him access to the world in which Holmes lives.

And while this world does hold interest for Watson, it is Holmes who keeps his attention.

As he spoke, his nimble fingers were flying here, there, and everywhere, feeling, pressing, unbuttoning, examining, while his eyes wore the same far-away expression which I have already remarked upon.

Taken out of context, the above quote is highly suggestive. I include it, not as a point in my analysis (although it is interesting to note the suggestiveness of Watson's description), as, in this instance Holmes is examining a body, but because, prior to this, Watson remarks upon the horror of seeing the body and his inability to look away. And yet, within moments his eyes exist solely for Sherlock Holmes.

The pair are now knee-deep in an investigation, Holmes operating in his element, Watson turned completely on his heel. I have mentioned above how quickly Holmes' went from acquaintance to friend, so the reader will undoubtedly find it fascinating

to learn that Watson now refers to Holmes as his companion. Subtle language, I grant you, but suggestive all the same, for without Holmes' decision to include Watson in his work, I very much doubt that this transition would have taken place.

Throughout Holmes' investigation we are treated to more of Holmes showing off; more so than he usually does, and one can easily attribute this to Watson's presence. Indeed, later, Holmes, pleased by Watson's intrigue, refuses to elaborate on his methods, stating:

I'm not going to tell you much more of the case, Doctor. You know a conjurer gets no credit when once he has explained his trick and if I show you too much of my method of working, you will come to the conclusion that I am a very ordinary individual after all."

It is obvious here that Holmes is quite concerned that Watson may eventually tire of him. Already he is showing a great deal of dependence on Watson, even if this dependence is solely for the benefit of his ego.

He needn't worry, of course, for Watson is far too awestruck to even consider Holmes ordinary.

"I shall never do that," I answered; you have brought detection as near an exact science as it ever will be brought in this world."

Holmes' reaction, one will agree, is quite appreciative.

My companion flushed up with pleasure at my words, and the earnest way in which I uttered them. I had already observed that he was as sensitive to flattery on the score of his art as any girl could be of her beauty.

We have now been privy to their meeting, and their tentative beginnings; as they weighed one another, and judged one another, and tested one another. We have seen evidence of the open curiosity and intense interest that first brought them to confide in one another. We have witnessed the first extensions of trust that would later form the foundation for a decades long relationship. All of this is marked by subtle flirting and playful banter, and yet, until this point, we have not yet delved beyond the bond created by Holmes' profession. This, soon, would change.

Having invited Watson to share in his art, Holmes seems to feel more at ease, and is perhaps more trusting of Watson than he was when they first met. He is comfortable now in sharing the other aspect of his life. This is evident upon their return trip to Baker Street, when Holmes turns the topic to music, mentioning Chopin, a composer well known for his highly romantic pieces.

"What's that little thing of Chopin's she plays so magnificently: Tra-la-la-lira-lira-lay."

Although in future stories, Watson will frequently accompany Holmes' to his concerts, in this instance, Watson, tired from the morning's exertions, chooses to pass the afternoon alone in Baker Street. He is incapable of resting, however, for his mind had been much too excited by the day's events.

He is still sorting out his thoughts when Holmes returns, and seems much preoccupied. So much so that Holmes comments:

"What's the matter? You're not looking quite yourself. This Brixton Road affair has upset you."

Holmes' concern here, it should be noted, is quite evident. It is obvious that he cares, at least somewhat at this point, for Watson's welfare. Again, it should be noted that it was not often that Sherlock Holmes expressed his concern, or concerned himself with the welfare of others.

His concern is tangible enough that he soon attempts to turn Watson's mind on to other things. Here, Holmes almost seems to ramble, somewhat aimlessly, as he jumps from topic to topic, covering everything from music to literature to Darwinian Theory without pause. Watson, it should be noted, does not miss a beat. Their entire exchange is very reminiscent of an old, married couple.

Holmes does not, however, allow Watson's upset to preclude Watson from the investigation. In fact, shortly after the arrival of the killer's accomplice (dressed as an old woman), Holmes rushes out after her (him), shouting to Watson, *wait up for me!*

And Watson does, passing the time by skimming through the pages of Murger's *Vie de Boheme*, which, at the time, was considered quite the erotic book.

Holmes, upon his return, is more than willing to share his failure with Watson, laughing as he relays the adventure, but not before confessing that he *wouldn't have the Scotland Yarders know it for the world*; a clear indication that his trust for Watson is growing.

His concern for Watson's welfare is again highlighted, as he remarks that Watson is looking *done-up* and immediately suggests that Watson *turn in* for the night, a suggestion that Watson obeys without hesitation.

In fact, we do not see Watson again until the morning, Watson telling us:

Sherlock Holmes and I read these notices [found in several London newspapers] over together at breakfast.

I will confess that the above statement is open to some interpretation, but the image that forms in my mind is that of two men, chairs pressed close together as they sit

around the dining room table, a collection of newspaper spread out before them, with the two of them leaning close together to read in unison.

It is an incredibly intimate scene, and speaks, in my opinion, to the rapidly developing bond that would remain unaltered for the better part of three decades. In fact, I think it is fairly safe to assume that this bond lasted long into their later years.

We must now take a moment and deviate from Holmes and Watson so that we might comment on one of the many side-stories that take place in this novel. Here we examine the alibi of Arthur Charpentier, Inspector Gregson's prime suspect, who provides the following explanation for his whereabouts during the time of the murder:

On his way home he met an old shipmate, and took a long walk with him. On being asked where this old shipmate lived, he was unable to give any satisfactory reply.

Given that his encounter with the murdered man lasted no more than a few minutes, and that he was out of the house for at least two hours, and that he was later found to be innocent, one must question: what, in the dead of the night, could these two have been doing that would have kept Charpentier away from home for several hours, and would have prevented him from knowing the address of his former shipmate?

Is it too much to suggest that this was an attempt on the part of Doyle (i.e. Watson) to draw the reader's attention to the existence of gay subplots within the story? The implications in Charpentier's comments are, after all, quite obvious.

We return now to Holmes and Watson, for it is at this point that Watson first expresses an interest in documenting and publishing Holmes' cases.

"It is wonderful!" I cried. Your merits should be publicly recognized. You should publish an account of the case. If you won't, I will for you."

And so begins Watson's career as biographer, brought about by the desire to share with the world the brilliance and wonder that he has discovered in Sherlock Holmes. I am certain I need not point out how unusual this behaviour is, for I seriously doubt that most men would even consider writing of their male friends in such a romantic manner.

"You may do what you like, Doctor."

There can be no doubt that Watson's praise touched Holmes, for he seems quite pleased with the suggestion. One can imagine that this instance is what brought down Holmes' final barriers, and solidified what was then an idle thought, because from that point forward Watson would play a central role, not just in Holmes' work, but in Holmes' life as well.

Within the passing of mere months, their friendship had formed, their partnership had begun, and the deeply intimate bond that existed between them was already quite evident. For an introduction to a relationship which would eventually feature prominently in all sixty of Doyle's stories, *A Study in Scarlet* does more than subtly hint at the exact nature of this relationship.

The Speckled Band

Dates:

The Adventure of the Speckled Band takes place a little over two years from the date that Holmes and Watson first met in A Study in Scarlet. Baring-Gould dates the case in April of 1883. It was originally published in the Strand Magazine in February 1892 (almost a year after Holmes' presumed death, and it is interesting to note that Watson uses the past tense when referring to Holmes in his introduction).

Synopsis:

The Adventure of the Speckled Band begins with a visit from a Miss Stoner, a woman who lives in perpetual fear of her stepfather, Dr. Roylott. She tells the story of her twin sister's death, and the unusual set of circumstances that surrounded it. Miss Stoner is now fearful for her own life, for upon being moved from her room into the room of her deceased sister, these circumstances reappear, boding ill for the soon to be married Stoner. Terrified, she enlists Holmes' aid in solving the mystery, but little does she know that Holmes is about to unravel a sinister plot that involves a bolted down bed, a dummy bell rope, a venomous Indian snake, and an inheritance bequeathed to her by her long dead mother. It is interesting to note that Arthur Conan Doyle ranked The Speckled Band as his favourite Sherlock Holmes story.

The Subtext:

Before we get in to the story itself, I want to first comment on the period in which Watson is writing this. The story, as I mentioned above, was first published in February of 1892. Holmes, as we discover in The Final Problem, was thought to have plummeted to his death in 1891. One can assume, then, that this story was written after Holmes' supposed death. This speaks to Watson's obsession with Holmes and, indeed, his love for Holmes, as almost a year after his friend's passing Watson is still writing up Holmes' cases.

It was early in April in the year '83 that I woke one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing, fully dressed, by the side of my bed.

The above line is interesting for two reasons. First, it is, quite literally, the opening line of the case. The case does not begin in the sitting room, as most cases do. The

case does not begin with the arrival of a client, as again, most cases do. It does not even begin with one of Holmes' startling observations which served to both baffle and delight Watson. Instead it begins, simply, in Watson's bedroom, with Holmes leaning over Watson's sleeping form.

The second reason is that Watson does not appear to find this odd. In fact, aside from being slightly groggy, and perhaps a little irritated at having his slumber disturbed, Watson seems quite comfortable with waking to find Holmes standing in his bedroom. The implications of this are quite staggering.

I mentioned above that Watson seems slightly irritated at having been woken in the early hours of the morning against his will. I should point out that this is reflected only in the narrative, and not at all in Watson's interaction with Holmes. In fact, Watson seems quite content to chat with Holmes from the comfort of his bed. Indeed, a few moments later, after Holmes has told him of the case (and Holmes does so in such a way as to suggest that he wouldn't possibly think of interviewing a client without Watson present) Watson is more than eager to hop out of bed and start the day.

Should it prove to be an interesting case, you would, I am sure, wish to follow it from the outset. I thought, at any rate, that I should call you and give you the chance."

"My dear fellow, I would not miss it for anything."

I will touch on the use of 'dear' in a moment, but for now I thought it interesting to point out the trust that has grown between the two men. Here we are, some two years into their relationship, and it is already a given that Watson will assist Holmes in his cases. That Holmes first thought would be of Watson (and not the case at hand) is quite remarkable, especially for someone as consumed by his work as Holmes tends to be.

This is not one-sided, as Watson is the first to admit that he: *had no keener pleasure than in following Holmes in his professional investigations, and in admiring the rapid deductions, as swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis with which he unravelled the problems which were submitted to him.*

It is obvious here that, despite the passage of time, Watson is still quite captivated by Holmes, and his methods.

The bedroom scene continues, with Watson springing from the bed and immediately dressing before following Holmes down to the sitting room. This is again highly suggestive, as it appears as though Holmes has remained in Watson's bedroom throughout Watson's changing. It is important to note that, in Victorian times, men would sleep in

full night attire, and wouldn't dream of attending a lady without dressing, so Watson would have needed to undress, and then redress, all under Holmes' watchful eye.

Shortly after arriving downstairs (one can presume from Watson's frequent use of the phrase 'down' that his bedroom sat on the floor above the sitting room), Holmes introduces Watson as his *intimate friend and associate*. While modern English language has its own interpretation for the term 'intimate', it should be noted that, in Victorian terms, the term 'intimate friend' was used to describe friendships which were particularly close in nature. While this definition is still quite ambiguous, its use was far less scandalous than today's meaning might imply. Still, it speaks to the closeness between the two men; to the bond between them and the underlying affection that marked their friendship.

When compared to *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Speckled Band* also marks a distinct shift in Watson's writing. His narrative has become entirely less formal in this story, as he often refers to Holmes as 'my friend' or 'my companion'. The gradual shift in familiarity which we first saw in *STUD* has been replaced entirely by terms of endearment.

"Excellent. You are not averse to this trip, Watson?"

"By no means."

It is also interesting to note that Watson's presence is now presumed. Holmes is still polite enough to ask, but his question is no longer an invitation, but rather, a request. It is obvious, then, that at this point Watson has established himself as Holmes' trusty biographer and companion.

I want to take a moment to point out some of the amusing shifts in language that have occurred over the years. One of the things I love about Victorian English is its expressiveness, and I can think of no better example than this:

The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion...

To which we can only reply:

Well done, Watson.

Returning now to more serious matters, I thought it prudent to further examine the nature of their partnership, as *The Speckle Band* is one of the better cases which highlights Watson's role in Holmes' life.

I should be very much obliged if you would slip your revolver into your pocket.

Over the course of sixty stories, this is not the first, nor is it the last, time that Holmes requests Watson bring his firearm. What is interesting in terms of subtext is that this is a very clear indication of trust. Not only does Holmes trust Watson's skill

with a firearm, but he is essentially putting his life in Watson's hands. Holmes, as we see again and again throughout Canon, very rarely carries a firearm. If it came down to it, it would be Watson covering Holmes and not the other way around. This requires an extraordinary amount of faith on Holmes' part, and it is interesting to note that he gives this over without hesitation.

It's shortly after this point that Holmes and Watson head out to investigate the scene of the crime. They take a train out into the country, and then travel by trap (a two-wheeled, informal carriage) to their destination. As they begin their travels, Watson finds himself remarking:

It was a perfect day, with a bright sun and a few fleecy clouds in the heavens. The trees and wayside hedges were just throwing out their first green shoots, and the air was full of the pleasant smell of the moist earth.

He later goes on to talk about the *sweet promise of spring*. This picture Watson has created is quite lovely. We get the impression of two men, sitting side by side in some sort of carriage, as it meanders through the English countryside, the two men enjoying the sights and quiet country air. This is incredibly romantic. In fact, especially given that this is the only time in the story that Watson waxes poetically on the subject of the weather, it is highly likely that this can be considered an attempt on Watson's part to romanticize the setting. Too often Holmes has scolded Watson for this very thing, and yet it is interesting to note that here (and elsewhere) Watson's romanticisms occur when only Holmes and Watson are present.

Upon arriving at Stoke Moran (their destination), Holmes immediately sets to work. Here, Watson falls into the roll of observer and relays Holmes' doings in vivid, precise detail. It is fascinating to note that, even two years into their partnership, Watson still pays attention to every motion Holmes makes. It has been noted elsewhere, by several Sherlockian Scholars, that Watson tended towards hero-worship as far as Holmes was concerned, and yet, one cannot help but speculate as to the exact nature of his obsession with Holmes. Too often, I have found, Watson sounds more like a man in love than a man awestruck by some great hero.

Some time passes, in which Holmes concludes his investigation of the Manor, upon which it is decided that the two men should wait for the cover of nightfall. They cannot, for obvious reasons, return to London, so instead:

Sherlock Holmes and I had no difficulty in engaging a bedroom and sitting-room at the Crown Inn.

The author would like to draw particular attention to the reference of ‘a’ bedroom.

One might be curious as to what took place within that bedroom. Fortunately for us, Watson is more than willing to share those particular details.

“Do you know, Watson,” said Holmes as we sat together in the gathering darkness, “I have really some scruples as to taking you tonight. There is a distinct element of danger.”

I want to break the above statement out into points of interest, for it contains several. The first refers of course to the passage, *sat together in the gathering darkness*. It has almost become a cliché now to presume that a late evening stake out should be accompanied by unresolved sexual tension. That is not to suggestion that it is without reason; clichés exist, after all, largely in part due to common knowledge and assumption. There is something decidedly subtextual in the image of Holmes and Watson, sitting alone in the dark, shoulder to shoulder, perhaps on the same bed, as they watch out the window for their prearranged signal. I’m fairly certain that this does not require elaboration.

The second passage I wish to highlight is that of Holmes’ concern. He knows that this mission is dangerous. He knows, too, that Watson stands a chance of getting hurt. He then voices his concern; states plainly that he doesn’t want to place Watson in danger. I can’t decide which element of this statement makes the more profound impact; that Holmes worries for Watson’s safety, or that he’s willing to express this worry, thus revealing the true depths of his feelings.

“My dear Holmes!”

Is Watson’s reply, and it is here that we examine the use of the term, *dear*. Dear, according to the Victorians, was a simple term of endearment. It was meant to express fondness, and affection, and feelings of friendship. The Victorians, however, were quite the repressed group (what does one expect from a people who actively covered their table legs in order to avoid thinking about sex), so their language developed in such a way as to be laden with innuendo, often without their realization. Given this knowledge, even the term *my dear* becomes highly suggestive in the context of this story. It is interesting to note that both Holmes and Watson use this term of endearment when addressing one another throughout *The Speckled Band*.

But we shall have horrors enough before the night is over; for goodness’ sake let us have a quiet pipe and turn our minds for a few hours to something more cheerful.

This comes in the midst of their stake out, and one can only imagine what something more cheerful could have occupied their minds for several hours, for it is close to nine before they spot Dr. Roylott and close to eleven before they receive their pre-

arranged signal. The details of these two hours, however, I shall leave to the reader's imagination.

Holmes was for the moment as startled as I. His hand closed like a vice upon my wrist in his agitation.

This particular passage occurs during their journey from the inn (and their single bedroom) to the Manor. I think the reader will agree with me when I state that Holmes was not an outwardly affectionate individual. We have very few references of him touching another individual (unless the case warranted it), and yet, the one person whom he does touch (and with some frequency) is Watson.

What is telling in the above line is that Holmes, startled and momentarily afraid, automatically reaches for Watson. In fact, reaching for Watson is his first instinct.

He recovers quickly, but can't quite bring himself to break contact with Watson.

Then he broke into a low laugh and put his lips to my ear. "It is a nice household," he murmured.

Is there anything more intimate than a man leaning close and whispering in his companion's ear? Notice, too, the use of the phrase, *put his lips to my ear*. Watson could have very easily used *whispered* and the reader would have been given the same impression, and yet, he chose to say, *put his lips to my ear*, something that, I confess, sends shivers of pleasure racing down my spine. I can only imagine Watson's initial reaction.

They continue across the lawn, and in through the open window to begin their vigil. Here, Watson again demonstrates the ease created by Holmes' presence.

I confess that I felt easier in my mind when, after following Holmes's example and slipping off my shoes, I found myself inside the bedroom. My companion noiselessly closed the shutters, moved the lamp onto the table, and cast his eyes round the room. All was as we had seen it in the daytime. Then creeping up to me and making a trumpet of his hand, he whispered into my ear again so gently that it was all that I could do to distinguish the words: "The least sound would be fatal to our plans."

In the above passage, the image that one conjures is that of two men, creeping around a dark bedroom, whispering words of warning to one another. Taken out of context this could easily be interpreted as a sexual encounter, hidden from society and the law, for homosexuality was considered immoral and had been branded illegal at the time. We must also note that, once again, Holmes is seen to be whispering in Watson's ear.

"Do not go asleep; your very life may depend upon it. Have your pistol ready in case we

should need it. I will sit on the side of the bed, and you in that chair.”

It is interesting to note, in the above statement, that Holmes chooses to sit on the bed, while placing Watson on the chair. It is the bed (being bolted to the floor and next to the bell pull, which acted as a bridge for the venomous snake) that provided the largest danger, and yet Holmes chose this location, wanting, perhaps, to keep Watson as far out of harm’s way as possible.

They sit this way for some time, until a hissing sound alerts Holmes to the presence of the snake, and instantly he strikes. The snakes retreat and moments later a great cry is heard.

It struck cold to our hearts, and I stood gazing at Holmes, and he at me, until the last echoes of it had died away into the silence from which it rose.

I want to comment on Watson’s use of the word, *gaze*. Gazing is commonly defined as: to look steadily, intently, and with fixed attention. In this particular context, stare, or possibly gape, would have been a better choice of words, and yet Watson uses gaze. This is quite suggestive, as it implies a sense of longing that the story does not particularly warrant.

The case ends, as most cases do, with Holmes explaining his reasoning and filling in, for Watson’s benefit, the steps he completed in order to solve the case. In most instances Holmes seems quite frustrated by this process, and yet, here he is patient and, indeed, thrilled to be able to share his deductive reasoning with his friend. The use of ‘my dear’ comes up several times throughout this exchange, solidifying the suggestion found throughout the story that Holmes holds Watson in an affectionate regard.

The Resident Patient

Versions:

Before we begin, I wanted to mention the existence of multiple versions of this story. At last count, there are three versions of The Resident Patient currently in circulation. The deviations in each version all occur within the first few paragraphs of the case. As mentioned previously, I am reading Baring-Gould's Annotated Sherlock Holmes, and here we find that a large portion of what was considered the original version (i.e. the version first published in the Strand Magazine) has been omitted. In the first English edition of The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, The Adventure of the Resident Patient was merged with several passages from the original Strand version of The Cardboard Box. Further information on these editorial changes can be found [here](http://www.sherlockian.net/canon/klinger.html)¹.

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates The Resident Patient in October of 1886, some five years after Holmes and Watson first met. The original version (which appeared in The Strand Magazine in 1893) indicates that this story took place in October of the *first year during which Holmes and I shared chambers in Baker Street*. The Memoirs' edition does not include a date, but seems to suggest a later period.

Synopsis:

The Resident Patient opens in Baker Street, Holmes consulted by a Doctor Percy Trevelyan, who, after explaining his unusual living situation and the odd circumstances surrounding his practice, requests Holmes' aid on behalf of his resident patient, Mr. Blessington. As part of a business arrangement, Dr. Trevelyan, with little money of his own, agreed to allow Blessington to set him up in practice in exchange for three-quarters of the practice's earnings. In addition, Blessington was to become a resident patient on the grounds that he had a weak heart and required constant doctor supervision. Concerned by Blessington's recently erratic behaviour and an unusual medical case, Dr. Trevelyan is also hoping Holmes can shed light on the situation. Holmes' investigation is stalled, however, with the discovery of Blessington's body, and Holmes must then turn his attention to mystery surrounding Blessington's death.

1 <http://www.sherlockian.net/canon/klinger.html>

The Subtext:

It should first be noted that each of the three versions of *The Resident Patient* will be examined. I have chosen to begin with the first English edition, as published in the collection of stories referred to as *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. This is a significantly longer version and, as such, warrants particular attention. It should again be noted that this version contains passages which first appeared in the Strand version of *The Cardboard Box*.

The case begins, as most cases do, with Holmes and Watson closeted away in Baker Street. It has become a familiar setting, and *The Resident Patient* gives what is perhaps one of the best examples of the domestic life which Holmes and Watson led between cases.

Our blinds were half-drawn, and Holmes lay curled upon the sofa, reading and re-reading a letter which he had received by the morning post.

There is something decidedly comfortable in Holmes' behaviour and, indeed, in the way in which Watson describes him. It is obvious here that the two men have spent a good deal of time in one another's presence, and have reached the point in their relationship where they are comfortable merely enjoying one another's company.

Finding that Holmes was too absorbed for conversation, I had tossed aside the barren paper, and leaning back in my chair, I fell into a brown study.

Here it is interesting to note that, despite the domesticity of the situation, Watson still longs for Holmes' companionship. This is evident in the above reference, as Watson, bored by the weather and lack of activity, and unable to engage in conversation with his friend, falls quickly into a *brown study*. This reference is a mark of how engaging Watson finds Holmes, and how quickly he reverts to a state of depression when Holmes' attention is lacking.

Fortunately for Watson, his study is quickly interrupted, for Holmes, perhaps sensing Watson's need for companionship, quickly turns his attention away from his letter and onto his friend and roommate. He does this in the only way that Holmes knows how; by making a startling deduction.

"You are right, Watson," said he. "It does seem a very preposterous way of settling a dispute."

"Most preposterous!" I exclaimed, and then, suddenly realizing how he had echoed the inmost thought of my soul, I sat up in my chair and stared at him in blank amazement.

Despite Watson's amazement, it should not surprise the reader to discover that

Holmes is capable of reading the inmost thoughts of Watson's soul. Holmes knows Watson well, and can read him easily; a sign of just how intimately aware of Watson Holmes has become.

Watson, in traditional Watsonian fashion, immediately confesses his confusion and requests that Holmes explain how he was able to deduce Watson's thoughts. Holmes' answer is quite suggestive.

"You remember," said he, "that some little time ago, when I read you the passage in one of Poe's sketches, in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thought of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere tour de force of the author. On my remarking that I was constantly in the habit of doing the same thing you expressed incredulity."

I am certain you will agree that there is something decidedly intimate in the act of one man reading anything, let alone Poe, to his male companion.

Watson, again in typical Watsonian fashion, denies this accusation. Holmes' response?

"Perhaps not with your tongue, my dear Watson, but certainly with your eyebrows."

It is quite curious to note that Holmes' observation of Watson is acute enough to not only discern Watson's emotions based solely upon the movement of his eyebrows, but recall the incident some time after it has occurred. Clearly, then, Holmes is in the habit of observing Watson quite closely.

Watson, however, is not convinced. He simply cannot conceive of how Holmes could know his inmost thoughts by a simple shift in his facial features. Holmes, of course, is more than willing to show off his talents, his boastful nature constantly coming to the forefront whenever he is in Watson's presence.

"Your features, and especially your eyes," Holmes clarifies, and again Holmes' demonstrates the close attention he tends to pay Watson.

Holmes' explanation continues as he retraces Watson's thought process. Here, he refers to a past incident with perfect clarity, suggesting that Holmes has stored long-passed conversations with his dear, and intimate, friend. For a man who is very selective in what he stores in his 'brain attic', it is interesting to note that his past interactions with Watson are considered important enough for storage.

Here we conclude our exploration of the Cardboard Box/Resident Patient merger. The conclusion of the exchange marks the beginning of the other two versions, each slightly altered, but containing one key element which is worthy of analysis.

"It was very superficial, my dear Watson, I assure you. I should not have intruded it

upon your attention had you not shown some incredulity the other day. But the evening has brought a breeze with it. What do you say to a ramble through London?" [Memories version]

"A day's work ruined, Watson," said he, striding across to the window. "Ha! The stars are out and the wind has fallen. What do you say to a ramble through London?" [Strand version]

"Unhealthy weather, Watson," said my friend. "But the evening has brought a breeze with it. What do you say to a ramble through London?" [Baring-Gould version]

Regardless of the version used, it is interesting to note Holmes' suggestion of a *ramble through London*. Bearing in mind that the two have passed the entire day inside, together. Holmes' desire to have Watson by his side on his *ramble* is a clear indication that Holmes both desires, and enjoys, Watson's company. It is interesting, too, to note Watson's response:

I was weary of our little sitting-room and gladly acquiesced.

This is interesting for two reasons. The first is the indication that, again, Holmes knows Watson well, as his invitation likely came upon sensing Watson's weariness. The second is the suggestion that Watson, while weary of their sitting room, is not in the least weary of Holmes' company.

In fact, Watson's enjoyment of Holmes' company becomes even more apparent as:

For three hours we strolled about together, watching the ever-changing kaleidoscope of life as it ebbs and flows through Fleet Street and the Strand. His characteristic talk, with its keen observance of detail and subtle power of inference held me amused and enthralled.

The author wishes to draw particular attention to the phrase: *held me amused and enthralled*. This is especially telling when one considers that Watson has just spent the day, not to mention the last one to five (depending on whose chronology we assume) years in Holmes' constant company.

The walk does eventually end, however, and the pair returns to Baker Street, Watson following *Holmes into our sanctum*; an interesting choice of phrases, and it is quite suggestion that Watson refers to Baker Street, not as his sanctum, but as *our* sanctum. Truly, Holmes and Watson are ensconced in domestic bliss.

Their return to Baker Street marks the arrival of a client, whom Holmes interviews at length. Upon the conclusion of this interview, Holmes *sprang up without a word, handed me my hat, picked his own from the table, and followed Dr. Trevelyan to the door*. Watson, it appears, has become a constant presence in Holmes' professional life, too.

Their on-site investigation does not go well, and Holmes leaves in dejected silence, refusing to speak for some time. When he does speak, his first act is to apologize to Watson, suggesting just how important Watson's feelings are to the Great Detective.

Watson pays little heed to Holmes' apology, instead using it as an excuse to turn the subject to the case, Watson quite obviously interested to hear Holmes' thoughts on the matter. A brief exchange ensues, at the end of which Watson shares his own theories on the case, much to Holmes' fond amusement.

I saw in the gaslight that Holmes wore an amused smile at this brilliant departure of mine.

"My dear fellow," said he, "it was one of the first solutions which occurred to me..."

There is obvious pride in Holmes' voice, that Watson has come so far as to be able to deduce along the same lines of reasoning as Holmes himself. It is a mark, too, of Watson's intelligence, something that too few scholars have acknowledged. Watson's quick wit and penchant for logic, I suspect, is one of the things which first attracted Holmes to Watson. It is interesting, too, to note the subtle shift in Holmes' mood. Upon leaving Dr. Trevelyan's, Holmes is quite obviously frustrated, and yet, within moments of their conversation his mood has improved dramatically.

It soon appears as if Holmes' improved mood is not a temporary condition, for the next morning Holmes seems quite content with the progress of the case:

At half-past seven next morning, in the first glimmer of daylight, I found him standing by my bedside in his dressing-gown.

This is the second² occasion we have had been witness to Holmes waking Watson; only this time he has not bothered to dress, something that, in Victorian times, would have been considered quite indecent.

It is curious, too, to note here that, again, Watson does not find Holmes' behaviour unusual, nor does he seem at all awkward with the fact that Holmes has once again intruded on his sleep. In fact, he calmly asks what matter is at hand, and the two proceed to discuss the case. It is apparent from this exchange that this is not merely the second time Holmes has woken Watson. In fact, in all likelihood this is a regular occurrence, and it is quite suggestion that Holmes should feel so comfortable in Watson's bedroom, and that Watson, in turn, should have no qualms with Holmes invading his private domain.

I'm going to deviate from Holmes and Watson for a moment, so that I can draw

your attention to the case itself, for at this point Holmes and Watson have returned to Dr. Trevelyan's residence to discover the apparent suicide of Trevelyan's resident patient, Blessington.

It is noteworthy to remark that I am not the first individual to attempt to document some of the sexually suggestive references in *The Adventure of the Resident Patient*. In fact, several Sherlockian Scholars have already pointed out these references, and while I am not going to comment on the theories themselves, I feel it is important to make note of them.

Well known Sherlockian Scholar, Chris Redmond, in his book *In Bed with Sherlock Holmes*, suggests a possibly connection between Blessington and the men who would later hang him. Redmond purports that, given that the men involved in the homicide had spent a considerable amount of time imprisoned together, it is highly probable that a sexual bond formed between them. Several scholars, including Redmond, have commented on the thinly-veiled homosexual rape scene which occurs prior to Blessington's death. More information regarding the theory can be found here³.

In addition, some scholars have proposed that the very plot (that of a rich man financing a young doctor's career) is evidence of homosexual subtext. Several theories have been put forth which suggest that Dr. Trevelyan was, in truth, a kept man.

I will again mention that I have chosen not to elaborate on these elements, as my primary interest rests with Holmes and Watson and any relationship which might have existed between them. It is interesting to note, however, the existence of potential homosexual subplots, as these theories lend weight to the theory that Holmes and Watson's relationship transcended that of two friends, colleagues, and roommates. Watson, of course, says it best:

"My dear Holmes!" I ejaculated.

This brings us to the end of the story, with Holmes and Watson returning to Baker Street, and breakfast, and the domestic life which formed the backdrop for each of Holmes' investigations.

3 <http://www.bcpl.net/%7Elmoskowi/hounds/intro/RESI.HTM>

The Noble Bachelor

Dates (with some notes):

Baring-Gould dates the Adventure of the Noble Bachelor in October of 1886, just a few days after The Resident Patient. I have issues with this date for two reasons. First, in this case Watson mentions his impending marriage, which, if The Noble Bachelor did occur several days after The Resident Patient, then there should be some mention of Watson's marriage in The Resident Patient. There is not. It is also worthwhile to note that almost all scholars agree that Watson met Miss Morstan in September of 1888, and while Baring-Gould subscribes to the three-marriage theory (i.e. that Watson was married three times) there is no indication anywhere in Canon (except via conjecture) that Watson was married to anyone other than Miss Morstan. We can then hypothesize that either this case occurred after The Sign of Four, in which case it should be dated in late 1888 or early 1889, or that Watson has been married several times; in which case, the date given by Baring-Gould for The Resident Patient is wrong. The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor was first published in April of 1892, and within the story Watson refers to the case as a four-year old drama. This would imply a date of 1888, possibly in the late part of the year, which would tie in to Watson's impending marriage to Miss Morstan. It is your author's opinion, then, that The Noble Bachelor took place in the late fall of 1888.

Synopsis:

In The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor, Lord St. Simon seeks Holmes' help in locating his missing bride. It appears as though she has vanished, shortly into the wedding breakfast which followed their wedding ceremony. Holmes comes to an immediate conclusion, but is unwilling to reveal the truth behind the matter until he has had a chance to add a touch of the dramatic. It is interesting to note that Arthur Conan Doyle ranked The Noble Bachelor at the bottom of his list of favourite stories. Complete with a red-herring, this is one of the few stories to end on a good note, for most of the characters involved.

The Subtext:

Before we begin, it should be noted that The Noble Bachelor is one of the few stor-

ies that is short on subtext. This is particularly interesting when one considers Doyle's thoughts on the story. Could it be that this tale ranked low on his list due in part to the lack of subtextual content?

It was a few weeks before my own marriage, during the days when I was still sharing rooms with Holmes in Baker Street, that he came home from an afternoon stroll to find a letter on the table waiting for him.

The above sentence is interesting for three reasons. The first is the time period in which Watson was writing this story. The Noble Bachelor was published in 1892, almost a full year after Holmes' apparent death in The Final Problem. It can be argued, then, that Watson refers to the past sharing of rooms with Holmes, not as a result of his marriage, but as a result of Holmes' demise. The second is the reference to his marriage. Watson, when reflecting upon the case, makes no mention of this marriage. In fact, Watson's wife-to-be does not appear, nor is she spoken of. There are two schools of thought on the reasons behind this. The first lies in the theory that Watson's wife (wives) was a mere literary creation. The second is the theory that Watson, out of respect for Holmes, or perhaps at Holmes' request, chose not to remind Holmes of his impending marriage. Either way, both theories are quite interesting in terms of subtext.

Here, however, we present a third theory. The Noble Bachelor revolves entirely around the disappearance of Lord St. Simon's bride. As the case resolves, we discover that Mrs. St. Simon was previously married and believed herself to be a widow. Shortly after the ceremony, she discovers that her late husband is, in fact, alive, and immediately abandons her new husband for the man she first married, and still loves.

There are some very interesting parallels here in terms of Holmes and Watson and their relationship. During the writing of this, Watson believes Holmes to be dead. We will later learn, as will Watson, that this is not the case. This case, then, could be construed as foreshadowing for Holmes' eventual return, and Watson's return to Holmes' side. It is also fascinating to note that Watson chooses this particular story to mention his impending marriage -- a story where marriage results in scandal, confusion and heartbreak. When combined with the parallels mentioned above, this is very suggestive of the nature of Holmes and Watson's relationship, and indeed, hints that Watson may have considered his relationship with Holmes to be akin to a marriage.

We can now turn to the case itself, for while short in subtext, several subtextual elements do exist. The case begins with Watson alone and bored in the sitting room in Baker Street. He is attempting to pass the time with the day's newspapers, and yet,

cannot seem to stop obsessing over a letter Holmes has received. Holmes returns, and Watson immediately points out this letter, recounting the two letters Holmes received that morning. This is an interesting beginning to the story, for Watson seems quite preoccupied with Holmes' correspondence. This has always struck me as slightly unusual, for although Holmes often received cases via post, Watson seems determined to know every aspect of Holmes' life. It is yet another example of Watson's continual obsession with Holmes.

Holmes reads the letter, out loud, for Watson's benefit, and then the two plunge head first into the potential case. Holmes, unable to make headway with the letter and his 'good old' indexes, turns to Watson for help.

I think that I must turn to you Watson, for something more solid.

Watson's role in Holmes' life has always been that of an anchor. Watson is solid, reliable, dependable, and, indeed, the foundation on which Holmes' life is built. Holmes needs Watson. He depends on Watson. He relies on Watson. This statement suggests that Holmes is well aware of this; possibly one of the reasons he might have requested that Watson refrain from mentioning his impending marriage. Holmes, as we will see in *The Sign of Four*, does not approve of Watson marrying.

Watson, acceding to Holmes' wishes, immediately begins reading to Holmes from the week's papers. This is yet another example in which either Holmes or Watson have read to the other; an incredibly intimate act. Here, too, we see that Watson, despite being preoccupied by his task, is still quite observant of Holmes.

"Terse and to the point," remarked Holmes, stretching his long, thin legs towards the fire.

Note the description Watson gives of Holmes, making particular reference to his long, thin legs. Watson, I suspect, is a leg man.

Watson's reading continues for nearly an hour, ending only with the arrival of their client. Again we are treated to a demonstration of just how indispensable Watson has become in terms of Holmes' professional activities.

Do not dream of going, Watson...

Naturally, Watson stays, for regardless of how many times he has been witness to Holmes' remarkable talents, Watson is perpetually intrigued by Holmes' process of deduction.

Returning to our theory above (that the parallels between the St. Simons and Holmes/Watson were intentional and meant to give insight into Holmes and Watson's relation-

ship) we see further indication that St. Simon's story is meant to parallel Holmes and Watson's, for during an interview with Lord St. Simon, Holmes learns of Simon's past lover; a woman considered by Scotland Yard to be one of the prime suspects. It is here that Holmes states:

"Still, jealousy is a strange transformer of characters."

It is quite easy to infer that this statement pertains, not only to the case, but to Holmes as well. I see no reason to doubt that Holmes would have been jealous of any other person to come into Watson's life, particularly when said person was to become Watson's wife.

Later, Lord St. Simon recalls something that his bride had said, moments before leaving the ceremony. She makes use of the term 'claim-jumping', which we later discover is a reference to her previous marriage and the duty she felt she owed her first husband. This is interesting, particularly in the context of Watson's impending marriage, for I do suspect that Holmes felt as though he had some claim over Watson, and likely Watson was aware of this: this is quite obvious when one examines the case itself, with its various references to marriage and pre-existing claims.

Watson, too, I suspect, felt as though he had some claim over Holmes. This is particularly evident when we examine the detail in which Watson describes Holmes, as well as the particular attention Watson gives Holmes.

"What's up, then?" asked Holmes with a twinkle in his eye.

Watson's tendency to refer to Holmes' eyes when attempting to depict Holmes' emotions is a reoccurring theme throughout Canon.

It is obvious, too, that Watson feels some sense of dependency on Holmes, for a short while later, after Holmes has left to conduct an investigation on his own, Watson remarks:

It was after five o'clock when Sherlock Holmes left me, but I had no time to be lonely, for within an hour there arrived a confectioner's man with a very large flat box.

A clear indication that Watson is often lonely in Holmes' absence. If, indeed, Watson's marriage(s) were not fabrications, then it is reasonable to suggest that Watson's marriage was the direct result of Watson's loneliness. Holmes was frequently away, or locked in his room when the depression that came with the conclusion of a case was upon him, and it is reasonable to assume that Watson would have likely sought out affection and attention from other individuals, perhaps as a means of supplementing the affection and attention he lacked in his relationship with Holmes.

The conclusion of this case is also interesting in terms of subtext, for, aside from being one of the few cases in which Holmes and Watson entertain dinner guests (and, although arriving at Holmes' invitation, Watson refers to Mrs. St. Simon and her previous husband as *our* guests) the final passage is also quite suggestive.

"Ah, Watson," said Holmes, smiling, "perhaps you would not be very gracious either, if, after all the trouble of wooing and wedding, you found yourself deprived in an instant of wife and of fortune. I think that we may judge Lord St. Simon very mercifully and thank our stars that we are never likely to find ourselves in the same position. Draw your chair up and hand me my violin, for the only problem we have still to solve is how to while away these bleak autumnal evenings."

Again, we are drawn into the St. Simon/Watson marriage parallel, and it is unclear whether Holmes is referring to St. Simon or Watson's impending marriage. It is curious, too, to note Holmes' suggestion of whiling away these bleak autumn evenings. Evenings is given as a plural, which suggests that either Watson's marriage is still a ways off, or that Holmes anticipates that it will not occur. I am inclined towards the latter, as Holmes mentions that *we are never likely to find ourselves in the same position*, implying that neither man will marry. Even removing the reference to Watson's wedding, it is quite suggestive that Holmes would choose to pass the time by playing his violin for Watson, something that again can be construed as quite intimate and, indeed, romantic.

I mentioned above that this case was short on subtext, and yet, as you can see from the analysis, the subtext is still present. I think, perhaps, that is the most telling feature of all.

The Second Stain

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Second Stain* in October of 1886, several days after *The Resident Patient* and *The Noble Bachelor*. It was first published in September, 1904, shortly after Holmes' retirement. It is interesting to note that Watson does not mention a date within this story, but does refer to his marriage; though whether he is referring to Miss Morstan, or Baring-Gould's first wife, is unclear.

Synopsis:

In the *Adventure of the Second Stain*, two infamous politicians grace the sitting room at 221B Baker Street to request Holmes' aid in locating a document of great political importance. So important is this document that war may very well erupt if its contents are discovered. Holmes agrees to take on the case, but finds it is far more complicated than he first imagined. Days pass before Holmes discovers his missing link; a second stain which unravels the entire mystery, and the woman behind it. With a little sleight of hand, Holmes is able to resolve the case to everyone's satisfaction.

The Subtext:

I had intended "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" to be the last of those exploits of my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, which I should ever communicate to the public. This resolution of mine was not due to any lack of material, since I have notes of many hundreds of cases to which I have never alluded, nor was it caused by any waning interest on the part of my readers in the singular personality and unique methods of this remarkable man.

The above is the paragraph that opens *The Second Stain*. It was written by Watson in 1904, some twenty-three years after their first meeting. It is interesting to note that, despite the passage of two decades, Watson refers to Holmes as a remarkable man, and makes particular note of his singular personality. It is obvious here that Watson never once grew tired of Holmes, nor did he ever lose interest in Holmes' career. A twenty-three year relationship and Watson is just as enthralled with Holmes as he was when they first met. Truly, this is a sign of a deep and lasting love.

The Second Stain is a remarkable story in that it contains several passages that lend weight to the theory that Watson felt some attraction towards men. We know that

he often expressed interest in the 'fairer sex', so it is safe to assume Watson can be defined as heterosexual. The Second Stain, however, provides an argument for bisexuality, which allows one to speculate on the sexual nature of Watson's attraction to Holmes. His love for Holmes has not been disputed, for love exists independent of sexuality, but when examining the potential sexual elements of Holmes and Watson's relationship, one must examine sexuality.

The other, dark, clear-cut, and elegant, hardly yet of middle age, and endowed with every beauty of body and of mind...

This is the description Watson provides for Trelawney Hope, one of the politicians who first sought Holmes' help in locating a missing political document. Watson refers to this man as elegant, and then goes on to state that he was *endowed with every beauty of body*, a clear indication of Watson's appreciation. Later, Watson, when referring to the second gentleman, refers to his eyes as *wonderful*, a curious choice of words, indeed:

Holmes turned away smiling from the keen scrutiny of those wonderful eyes.

The two noteworthy politicians remain long enough to provide the details surrounding the missing letter. Upon leaving, Holmes immediately deduces that there are only three men in all of London who might now hold this letter. Watson, upon hearing the names, remarks to Holmes that one of the men appears in the day's paper, seemingly murdered.

My friend has so often astonished me in the course of our adventures that it was with a sense of exultation that I realized how completely I had astonished him. He stared in amazement, and then snatched the paper from my hands.

We are already quite aware that Watson is perpetually amazed by Holmes, and yet, here it would appear that, on occasions, Watson is just as capable of astonishing Holmes. In fact, I very much doubt that anyone (aside from Watson, of course) should be capable of such a feat. This is highly suggestive when one examines the reasons behind Holmes' desire to keep Watson as a constant companion. For a man who is very rarely surprised, Watson must, on occasion, prove quite delightful.

Holmes recovers fairly quickly, and the pair begin to examine the case in earnest. Before they can delve too deep, however, they are interrupted by the arrival of Trelawney Hope's wife. Holmes remains polite, but it is obvious that he is frustrated by this interruption. As their interview progresses, Holmes shifts from irritation to suspicion, and upon her leave-taking, turns to Watson to ask:

“Now, Watson, the fair sex is your department,” said Holmes with a smile, when the dwindling frou-frou of skirts had ended in the slam of the front door. “What was the fair lady’s game? What did she really want?”

Aside from acknowledging what we have long suspected (that Holmes’ experience with women is limited, if not entirely non-existent), we see here that Holmes is deeply suspicious of women, as he automatically assumes her visit had some ulterior motive. This theme continues, as Holmes states:

“And yet the motives of women are so inscrutable. You remember the woman at Margate whom I suspected for the same reason. No powder on her nose — that proved to be the correct solution. How can you build on such a quicksand? Their most trivial action may mean volumes, or their most extraordinary conduct may depend upon a hairpin or a curling tongs.”

It is curious to note that, if we assume Baring-Gould’s chronology, then this case occurs a few days after *The Resident Patient* and *The Noble Bachelor*. Watson stated in *The Noble Bachelor* that he was a few weeks away from his marriage, which would imply that we are now perhaps a week away from his marriage. A curious time, then, for Holmes to question the virtue of women. This is particularly noticeable in Holmes’ question: *How can you build on such quicksand?* Again, it is made obvious that Holmes is strongly opposed to Watson’s impending marriage.

Their conversation seems to hit a little too close to home, and Holmes, perhaps embarrassed by his remark, perhaps feeling as though he has revealed too much, chooses to leave. Watson, it should be noted, is not invited to participate in the initial investigation, something that is seemingly off when one considers Holmes’ past behaviour. Could it be that Holmes required some distance? Perhaps as a means of burying the anxiety and upset Holmes was experiencing in regards to Watson’s upcoming nuptials?

All that day and the next Holmes was in a mood which his friends would call taciturn, and others morose. He ran out and ran in, smoked incessantly, played snatches on his violin, sank into reveries, devoured sandwiches at irregular hours, and hardly answered the casual questions which I put to him.

Although we have seen Holmes frustrated over the proceedings (or lack thereof) of a case, we have not seen him in such a depressed state. Holmes’ depression tends to be reserved for those occasions when he is without case. One cannot help but question whether Holmes’ mood is the direct result of the case at hand, or if it is entirely related

to Watson, Watson's impending marriage, and his earlier outburst, which Holmes no doubt worries conveyed entirely too much emotion.

In fact, Holmes' mood has deteriorated to such a degree that days pass before Holmes once again includes Watson in his investigation.

"My dear Watson," said he, as he rose from the table and paced up and down the room, "you are most long-suffering, but if I have told you nothing in the last three days, it is because there is nothing to tell."

Here, the combination of 'dear' and Holmes statement that Watson is 'long-suffering' is a clear indication of Holmes' guilt. He realizes that he has behaved badly and feels incredibly remorseful for having done so. Holmes has also come to realize the importance of having Watson by his side, for it is not until he includes Watson that he begins to make some headway.

"...Put on your hat, Watson, and we will stroll down together to Westminster."

It is not until Watson takes his rightful place at Holmes' side that Holmes is able to arrive at the correct solution. What is more, Holmes realizes this, and as the pieces connect, Holmes is more than willing to once again include Watson in his investigation.

"Now, Watson, now!" cried Holmes with frenzied eagerness.

"Quick, Watson, quick! Get it back again!"

It should be remarked that Holmes was seen to be *leaning languidly against the mantel-piece* shortly after this scene. The author will leave the reader to fill in the blanks.

Having realized the importance of Watson's role in Holmes' work (and, indeed, life) Holmes is more than willing to make amends. He does so subtly, but with some warmth.

"Come, friend Watson, the curtain rings up for the last act."

Watson takes all of this in stride, never once questioning his friend's mood swings; a mark of just how enamoured Watson truly is. It is interesting to note here that Holmes' initial suspicion of Mrs. Hope proves to be warranted, for it was in fact her who stole her husband's document. Holmes seems quite pleased with this, and one can almost imagine him turning to Watson to say: *Ha! This is what comes of trusting the fairer sex, my dear Watson.* He does not, of course, and yet, as he explains to Watson that he has solved the case, his tone comes dangerously close to gloating.

My mind filled with admiration for this extraordinary man.

Not that Watson seems to mind, for I dare say there is nothing Holmes could have said or done which would have resulted in a different sentiment. Watson, quite frankly,

is too blinded by admiration (and, indeed, love) to notice Holmes' flaws.

I am going to conclude, not with a quote, but with a concept. The story ends with Holmes actively concealing Mrs. Hope's actions in an effort to protect her from her husband's disappointment. He does this largely in response to Mrs. Hope's pleas, for it is obvious to the reader (and to Holmes) that her actions were based entirely on the misguided desire to protect the man she loves. This is quite telling, as a man incapable of love would likely have exposed Mrs. Hope: one incapable of love is often incapable of understanding the faulty logic that lies behind it. This stands as undisputed proof, then, that Holmes has known love (perhaps even knows love) for why else would he be willing to go to such lengths to save a marriage?

Many scholars have painted Holmes as something more akin to machine than man, incapable of love or the compassion that comes from seeing and recognizing love. This story paints a very different picture of Sherlock Holmes, one that suggests that he knows love entirely too well, and, indeed, that he is more than willing to sacrifice one of his core principles to ensure love's survival.

The Reigate Squires

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Reigate Squires* in April of 1887. As this is the exact date given by Watson, most scholars concur with Baring-Gould's chronology. The Reigate Squires first appeared in the Strand Magazine in June of 1893. It is interesting to note that *The Reigate Squires* is one of 24 stories written during the time of Holmes' supposed death. Watson, it would appear, turned to writing Holmes' biography as a means of overcoming his grief.

Synopsis:

Holmes, exhausted from a rather strenuous case in France, becomes quite ill, much to Watson's horror. Convinced that his friend is in need of a holiday, Watson takes Holmes to a friend's estate near Reigate, in Surrey, for some fresh country air and much needed relaxation. Much to Watson's chagrin, a case seems to find them, and before long Holmes is in the midst of a most singular investigation, where a common burglary isn't what it seems, and the murder of a coachman is tied directly to a disputed legal claim, all of which Holmes is able to deduce from a single piece of torn paper.

The Subtext:

On referring to my notes I see that it was upon the fourteenth of April that I received a telegram from Lyons which informed me that Holmes was lying ill in the Hotel Dulong.

The story begins, as most of Watson's reminiscences begin, with a referral to his notes. The above paragraph is not unusual, nor is it particularly telling, and yet, I am sure you will agree, Watson's reaction is, if not unexpected, very suggestive:

Within twenty-four hours I was in his sick-room and was relieved to find that there was nothing formidable in his symptoms.

I want to draw particular attention to the timeline given by Watson. Watson states that *within twenty-four hours* he was by Holmes' side. According to Google Maps⁴, the distance (as the crow flies) between London and Lyons is 460 miles (740 kilometres). Most sources agree that trains (by the turn of the century) could travel at speeds upwards of 70 miles per hour. Even using this top speed, and considering a direct route,

4 <http://www.google.com/maps>

it would have taken Watson 6.6 hours to travel from London to Lyons.

This does not include time for Watson to pack, or make his way to the train station, or purchase his ticket. And it is highly likely that the voyage itself took a good deal longer than 7 hours. Upon reaching Lyons, Watson would have needed to hail a hansom and make his way across the city to the Hotel Dulong. It is evident, then, that upon receiving Holmes' telegram, Watson, quite literally, dropped everything and rushed to his friend's side.

This is particularly interesting if we consider Baring-Gould's chronology. Baring-Gould suggests that, during this time, Watson was married and in practice. If this is the case, then it is highly probable that Watson cast both his wife, and his practice, to the wayside in his efforts to reach Holmes. Clearly, this haste on Watson's behalf goes beyond that of a worried friend.

We must then consider Holmes' illness. According to Watson, Holmes has been on the continent for two months, investigating an exceedingly high profile case. Watson's whereabouts are unknown, yet it is reasonable to infer that he had remained in London. Often we have seen Holmes lapse into various states of depression following the closure of a case, and yet, this is the first time said depression has led to an actual illness. Could it be that Watson's presence (or lack thereof) was in some way responsible for Holmes' weakened constitution?

Three days later we were back in Baker Street together; but it was evident that my friend would be much the better for a change, and the thought of a week of springtime in the country was full of attractions to me also.

We now know that Watson remained by Holmes' side for three days (again, ignoring his duty to his practice, and his wife) before bringing Holmes home to Baker Street. Upon arriving in London, Watson's first action is not to head home to his family and business, but rather, to take his friend on a week long retreat into the country.

It has been argued by some that this is indicative of Watson's bachelorhood (i.e. proof that he is not married at this time), but if Baring-Gould is correct, and Watson is married, then this passage is highly suggestive of just where Watson's priorities lie.

It is interesting, too, to note Watson's language in the above passage. He speaks of a week of springtime in the country, and states that it was full of attractions for him also. A more fitting description of a romantic getaway I have yet to read.

Watson decides upon taking Holmes to visit *my old friend, Colonel Hayter, who had come under my professional care in Afghanistan* in Reigate, near Surrey. As many know,

the meeting of friends is a rather significant event in the development of a relationship.

A little diplomacy was needed, but when Holmes understood that the establishment was a bachelor one, and that he would be allowed the fullest freedom, he fell in with my plans and a week after our return from Lyons we were under the colonel's roof.

Here it is curious to note Holmes' reluctance to accept Watson's invitation, and the eventual grounds on which he accepted said invitation. That Holmes would feel more comfortable recovering from his illness in a bachelor establishment is one of the many examples of Holmes' discomfort with women.

The author also wishes to draw attention to the line: *he fell in with my plans*. The wording here is quite ambiguous, and brings to mind plans of seduction; two men, alone in a bachelor establishment on the outskirts of London, enjoying the country air...

Unfortunately for Watson (and the reader) his plans are waylaid, as an interesting problem, criminal in nature, soon peaks Holmes' interest. Hayter, Watson's old friend, inadvertently mentions a recent burglary in the district, the details of which prove quite singular, and, indeed, impossible for Holmes to resist. Watson, it is safe to assume, is less than impressed.

But I held up a warning finger.

"You are here for a rest, my dear fellow. For heaven's sake don't get started on a new problem when your nerves are all in shreds."

He quietly scolds Holmes, and one can easily sense his worry, and indeed his disappointment in this turn of events. We get the sense that he has been longing for a chance to spend some quiet, simple time with Holmes, and so, when Holmes' attention is diverted, Watson seems quite put out by it.

Holmes agrees, reluctantly, to stay out of the affair, but when burglary turns to murder, Holmes can no longer resist the case's pull.

We aren't shown Watson's reaction to this fresh development, although one can easily imagine Watson's worry and irritation, for, turning to Watson, Holmes says:

"All right, Watson, I don't intend to meddle."

The arrival of an inspector requesting Holmes' aid quickly alters the situation, and Holmes is left with little choice but to go back on his word. He does this good-humouredly, but not without an apology (of sorts) for straining Watson's nerves.

"The fates are against you, Watson," said he, laughing.

Watson knows when he is beat, and graciously accedes to Holmes' wishes, stepping back (one can almost picture with a flourished bow) and leaving Holmes to his work. Holmes begins as he always has, with a line of questioning only Watson seems to understand, before heading off with the inspector to view the scene of the crime.

The inspector returns alone, some time later, and seems quite off-put by Holmes' methods. He states that Holmes was behaving *queerly* and that he was *very much excited*, his tone suggesting concern and perhaps a touch of uncertainty. Watson is quick to interject, defending his friend as only Holmes' loyal companion can.

"I don't think you need alarm yourself," said I. "I have usually found that there was method in his madness."

The above is said with some affection, and one can almost picture Watson's fond smile as he thinks of Sherlock Holmes. He has given in to Holmes' desire to be working, and, in doing so, has found himself rather content with the knowledge that Holmes has not changed. One need only read between the lines to sense Watson's great relief.

The inspector does not seem comforted by Watson's reassurances, but leads Watson and the Colonel out to meet Holmes, where, Holmes' greets Watson quite warmly.

"Watson, your country trip has been a distinct success. I have had a charming morning."

Watson, it would appear, certainly knows how to show Holmes a good time. It is no wonder, then, that Holmes has willingly kept Watson by his side for all of these (six) years.

Holmes, after recounting his morning's adventures, leads the party up to the house, where they run into the home's owners, Alec Cunningham, and his father, Mr. Cunningham. It is curious here to note that Watson, upon introducing Alec Cunningham, refers to him as a *dashing young fellow*, as again we are privy to Watson's appreciation of the male sex.

Holmes, suspicious of the Cunninghams, distracts the inspector from revealing too much by feigning illness. Watson, as we will see below, is quite alarmed.

My poor friend's face had suddenly assumed the most dreadful expression. His eyes rolled upward, his features writhed in agony, and with a suppressed groan he dropped on his face upon the ground. Horrified at the suddenness and severity of the attack, we carried him into the kitchen, where he lay back in a large chair and breathed heavily for some minutes. Finally, with a shamefaced apology for his weakness, he rose once more.

Particular attention should be given to Watson's use of the phrase *my poor friend*,

which implies both ownership, and a sense of acute empathy. Watson also states that he was *horrified* upon witnessing the display, one of the many instances where Watson has allowed his worry and concern to find its way into one of his reminiscences.

Having recovered slightly, Holmes begins questioning the Cunninghams, obviously finding satisfactory answers, for moments later he requests their signature on a document offering a reward for information pertaining to the murder. This is the exchange that follows:

"In the first place," said Holmes, "I should like you to offer a reward — coming from yourself, for the officials may take a little time before they would agree upon the sum, and these things cannot be done too promptly. I have jotted down the form here, if you would not mind signing it. Fifty pounds was quite enough, I thought."

"I would willingly give five hundred," said the J. P. [elder Mr. Cunningham], taking the slip of paper and the pencil which Holmes handed to him. "This is not quite correct, however," he added, glancing over the document.

"I wrote it rather hurriedly."

"You see you begin, 'Whereas, at about a quarter to one on Tuesday morning an attempt was made,' and so on. It was at a quarter to twelve, as a matter of fact."

I was pained at the mistake, for I knew how keenly Holmes would feel any slip of the kind. It was his specialty to be accurate as to fact, but his recent illness had shaken him, and this one little incident was enough to show me that he was still far from being himself.

Here we are once again treated to Watson's empathy, for Watson clearly states that he *was pained at the mistake*. We get the sense that Watson is growing more and more concerned as the case proceeds, likely reconsidering his earlier permission to allow Holmes to participate in the investigation. It is quite evident that Watson cares deeply, not only for Holmes, or his health and welfare, but for his reputation as well.

We find out later that the entire incident was orchestrated in order to obtain a sample of Mr. Cunningham's writing. This point however, and Watson's response, we will come back to.

Fully recovered now from his 'attack', Holmes requests a tour of the house. Shortly after entering into Mr. Cunningham's bedroom, Holmes *fell back until he and I were the last of the group*. This is one of the many occasions where Holmes and Watson are seen to engage in silent communication. Watson does not fully comprehend Holmes' methods, but he knows enough of them, and what's more, trusts Holmes implicitly, so he does not question Holmes' actions, instead conforming immediately to the situa-

tion at hand.

As we passed it Holmes, to my unutterable astonishment, leaned over in front of me and deliberately knocked the whole thing over. The glass smashed into a thousand pieces and the fruit rolled about into every corner of the room.

“You’ve done it now, Watson,” said he coolly. “A pretty mess you’ve made of the carpet.”

I stooped in some confusion and began to pick up the fruit, understanding for some reason my companion desired me to take the blame upon myself. The others did the same and set the table on its legs again.

Notice that, again, Watson does not question Holmes’ actions. He takes them in stride; quite willing to take the blame, for his trust in Holmes is unwavering.

Holmes uses this incident to slip away, but his leaving does not remain unnoticed for long. Soon the Cunninghams, both father and son, are after him, leaving the others behind in utter confusion.

His words were cut short by a sudden scream of “Help! Help! Murder!” With a thrill I recognized the voice as that of my friend. I rushed madly from the room on to the landing. The cries which had sunk down into a hoarse, inarticulate shouting, came from the room which we had first visited. I dashed in, and on into the dressing-room beyond. The two Cunninghams were bending over the prostrate figure of Sherlock Holmes, the younger clutching his throat with both hands, while the elder seemed to be twisting one of his wrists. In an instant the three of us had torn them away from him, and Holmes staggered to his feet, very pale and evidently greatly exhausted.

Such a suggestive scene! Here is Watson, hearing cries of help from his dear and intimate friend, Sherlock Holmes, rushes *madly from the room* before *dashing in* and *in an instant* he flings himself upon the aggressors in an effort to save Holmes from certain injury.

Truly, Watson would go to any length to keep his friend from harm. This theme re-occurs throughout *The Reigate Squires*, as Watson’s constantly hovering, and constant worry, are all directed towards keeping Holmes from harm.

As mentioned previously, both Holmes’ attack in the courtyard, and his mistake which appeared in the advertisement for information, were intentional, orchestrated in an effort to collect evidence. It is not until after the case has been resolved, and the Cunninghams have been arrested, that Holmes makes this known.

Holmes first admits to feigning the attack which rendered him prostrate in front of the Cunningham’s house. Watson’s reply is quite telling.

"Speaking professionally, it was admirably done," cried I, looking in amazement at this man who was forever confounding me with some new phase of his astuteness.

Such admiration! Holmes, it is quite apparent, perpetually amazes and astonishes Watson, something that invariably affects Watson in such a way as to ensure Watson's continuous presence in Holmes' life. It is telling that Watson would react this way to Holmes, but perhaps what is more telling is that Holmes, desiring to keep Watson interested, goes out of his way to engage in these dramatic displays.

Holmes then goes on to confess his ruse with the wording of the advertisement, to which Watson replies:

"Oh, what an ass I have been!" I exclaimed.

Even Watson knows that he should have known better, and yet, Holmes is so convincing that Watson can't help but place all of his faith in Holmes, regardless of whether that faith rests in Holmes' strengths, or his weaknesses.

"I could see that you were commiserating me over my weakness," said Holmes, laughing. "I was sorry to cause you the sympathetic pain which I know that you felt."

Holmes, it would appear, is well aware of the empathetic connection Watson shares with him. In fact, he seems quite pleased by it. He does apologize, though, for it is obvious here that he too shares an empathetic connection with Watson.

The case, having drawn to its conclusion, ends with what is quite possibly the most telling line of all:

"Watson, I think our quiet rest in the country has been a distinct success, and I shall certainly return much invigorated to Baker Street to-morrow."

I suspect, somewhere buried in the depths of Watson's subconscious, Watson was well aware of what Holmes needed to recover. Though he could not have known of the burglary, or the eventual murder, it is evident that Watson was fully aware that allowing Holmes to participate in the investigation would speed Holmes in his recovery. No wonder, then, that Holmes often refers to Watson as scintillating.

A Scandal in Bohemia

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *A Scandal in Bohemia* in May of 1887. Watson tells us that the date is March of 1888, but throughout the case he eludes to his recent marriage, suggesting a later date. For those that abide by the one marriage rule, this would place the case no earlier than March of 1889. Given the sensitive subject matter contained within the case, it is highly likely that Watson disguised certain facts, lending weight to the March of 1889 theory. Watson met Mary in September of 1888, and married her in late '88, early '89, suggesting that he would be newly wed in *A Scandal in Bohemia*; a fact that is verified by Watson's narrative and several of the statements made by Holmes throughout the case. *A Scandal in Bohemia* was first published in July of 1891 and marks the start of what was to become *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. It is the third reminiscence to come from Watson's pen.

Synopsis:

Watson, some months into his marriage, once again finds himself in Baker Street. There, he finds Holmes engaged by a mysterious letter which promises intrigue and interest. No sooner does Holmes catch Watson up to speed than the sender of the letter arrives, in disguise, to seek Holmes' aid. Holmes is immediately able to reveal the identity of this masked client, who turns out to be none other than Wilhelm Gottsreich Sigismond von Ormstein, Grand Duke of Cassel-Felstein, the hereditary King of Bohemia. The King requires Holmes' assistance in retrieving a photograph, the release of which would mean certain scandal. Holmes' cunning and wits won't be enough, however, to retrieve this photograph from its owner; one Ms. Irene Adler, of dubious, and questionable memory.

The Subtext:

The story begins with Watson's introduction of Ms. Irene Adler. This interesting for a number of reasons, the most prevalent being Watson's suggestion that there was something definitive concerning this woman and her role in Holmes' life. This has led several scholars to make the assumption that Holmes held Adler in some regard; indeed, some scholars have even suggested that the Great Detective was, in fact, in love

with the woman.

Seconds later, however, Watson is very particular to note that Holmes is incapable of love, stating that love goes against his very nature, and that there was no possible way that Holmes could have felt anything beyond mere professional admiration for Irene Adler.

I want to take a moment to put these warring allusions into perspective. Within the span of a paragraph, Watson suggests that Holmes' interest in Irene went beyond simple professional interest, and then goes on to tell us that Holmes was incapable of love and, hence, could not have possibly loved Irene. These two statements are in clear conflict, and here one must examine Watson's motives in order to fully comprehend his intentions.

First, as we have seen in previous cases, Watson is very much interested in romanticizing Holmes. Holmes himself has called Watson on this on numerous occasions. It is obvious, then, that Watson feels the need to portray Holmes as a human, quite capable of love.

At the same time, Watson does not want to consider the possibility that Holmes could love, simply for the reason that a Holmes in love would result in a Holmes no longer interested in Watson's company. It is clear here, then, that Watson both wants and needs Holmes to be capable of love, and yet does not wish for Holmes to love anyone (aside, perhaps, from Watson, that is). In other words, Watson wants Holmes to love, but rejects Irene as a source of that love by stating that Holmes is incapable of love, even though he has just gone out of his way to suggest the exact opposite.

Curious.

We see, too, in Watson's description of Holmes (as nothing more than a cold, precise, calculating mind, incapable of human emotions) a sense of bitterness, which suggests that Watson longs for something more. Indeed, Watson even speculates on Holmes as a lover, automatically rejecting the notion, again with much bitterness.

This introduction is quite long-winded, a sign of Watson's agitation regarding the subject matter. Indeed, after theorizing on Adler, and Holmes' interest in her, Watson then turns to his recent marriage, waxing poetically over his wife, married life, and how happy he is for several paragraphs. The reader is given a sense of falsehood here, as Watson's assurances that he is happy seem slightly unnecessary. In fact, it calls to mind the old adage:

Methinks [the boy] doth protest too much.

Finally Watson moves on to the actual case, and by this point the reader is thoroughly convinced that: a) Watson is not entirely as happy as he wants to appear, and b) Holmes has no interest in Adler, aside from professional curiosity and, perhaps, grudging respect.

The case begins with Watson's arrival at Baker Street. It should be noted that Watson was not summoned, but rather, *found himself in the area and had a keen desire to see Holmes again*. This is curious, for one cannot help but wonder how often during his absence from Baker Street Watson found himself in the area. How often did his need to see Holmes overwhelm his [supposedly] happily married existence?

It is obvious that Watson is still quite attached to the Great Detective and the life they shared, for upon arriving at Baker Street he refers to the rooms as *our* lodgings. Regardless of the dates used, it has evidently been several months since Watson was last entitled to that claim.

Attachment aside, Watson obviously feels a great sense of loss, too, for he refers to Holmes as *my former friend and companion*. This is certainly a conflicted narrative, which is perhaps an indication of Watson's conflicted emotions; he wants to be happy in his married life, and yet he misses Holmes and the life they had together.

As I passed the well-remembered door, which must always be associated in my mind with my wooing, and with the dark incidents of the Study in Scarlet, I was seized with a keen desire to see Holmes again, and to know how he was employing his extraordinary powers.

The above passage sums up nicely the entire introduction. I'm going to analyze this in pieces, for there are several noteworthy elements contained within.

The first in the reference to wooing. Several scholars have suggested that this paragraph references Mary Morstan, or some earlier wife. One can argue, however, that this passage refers instead to Holmes. There are two points in favour of this theory, which we will examine in turn:

1) Watson mentions his wooing and A Study in Scarlet in the same sentence. This implies that the two are related. We know that Watson was a bachelor in A Study in Scarlet, for it was then that he first took rooms with Sherlock Holmes. We know too that that he had not met any particular female during this period, for the case ends with the two men ensconced in Baker Street, cohabiting peacefully. It is therefore reasonable to assume that since Watson mentions the two he wishes us to associate his wooing with A Study in Scarlet. And since Watson was a bachelor with no female prospects in A Study in Scarlet, Watson intends for us to connect said wooing to Holmes.

2) Watson, in reflecting back on his wooing, is overcome with a keen desire to see Holmes again. If, as some scholars have suggested, this wooing was in reference to Watson's wife, it is very likely that the memory should result in a keen desire for Watson to head home and see his wife. Since, instead, it is Holmes that Watson suddenly desires to see, one can easily connect the two and suggest that Watson's desire to see Holmes is directly related to his earlier wooing. This theory becomes even more prevalent when one considers the fact that Watson just happened to find himself in Baker Street, a clear indication that Watson's subconscious desire for Holmes was directing his actions.

Heading inside, Watson takes particular care to mention Holmes' reaction upon seeing his *old friend and biographer*. It is evident that Watson worried over this reaction, and so he is pleased to learn that Holmes is thrilled by Watson's arrival. In fact, the two immediately fall back into familiar patterns, bantering back and forth and in general enjoying one another's company. It is obvious, then, that regardless of where either man is in his life, together they are timeless.

"Wedlock suits you," he remarked. "I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you."

"Seven!" I answered.

"Indeed, I should have thought a little more. Just a trifle more, I fancy, Watson."

There is clear teasing in this exchange, and one gets the impression that Holmes delights in getting a rise out of Watson, especially where his marriage (something that Holmes does not, as we will see in *The Sign of Four*, approve of) is concerned.

I want to take a moment now to touch on the dating of this story. Assuming Baring-Gould's chronology, which dates *A Scandal in Bohemia* in May of 1887 and Watson's first marriage in the late fall of 1886 or early winter of 1887, then it is safe to say that several months have passed between Watson's marriage and this case. This seems reasonable when one examines the dialogue contained within the story. It is obvious, based solely upon Holmes and Watson's interaction, that they have not seen one another since Watson's marriage.

So far Baring-Gould's chronology seems accurate, except that he dates *The Reigate Squires* in April of 1887, and that this story takes place after Watson's marriage. If this is the case, then Holmes and Watson have seen one another since Watson's 'first' marriage, and since the dialogue in *A Scandal in Bohemia* suggests otherwise, we can automatically discount Baring-Gould's date and assume a date of 1889, making the

wife in question Mary Morstan.

It is important to clarify dates, because, as previously mentioned, it has been some months since Holmes and Watson last saw one another. Indeed, it is curious to note that Holmes has not sought Watson out since Watson's marriage. For two close and intimate friends this is slightly unusual, as one would expect that their friendship would continue regardless of Watson's marital status. One cannot help but wonder at the reasons behind this drifting apart, particularly in the context of Watson's marriage. It is obvious here that both men felt some level of awkwardness; a usual sensation for two men bound solely by friendship.

It is interesting to note, too, that, despite the passage of months, Holmes and Watson immediately fall back into their previous patterns; Holmes deducing to Watson's amazement, Watson's amazement fuelling Holmes' deductions. It is evident here that Holmes missed Watson, as well as the chance to show off his skills for an enthusiastic audience. That Watson missed Holmes has never been in doubt.

In fact, Holmes is so glad to see his old friend and companion that he immediately includes Watson in his latest case, not bothering to ask Watson if he has the time (despite the fact that Watson now has both a practice and a family life). Watson, it is interesting to note, does not consider either before agreeing readily.

Hold it up to the light."

I did so, and saw a large "E" with a small "g," a "P," and a large "G" with a small "t" woven into the texture of the paper.

"What do you make of that?" asked Holmes.

"The name of the maker, no doubt; or his monogram, rather."

"Not at all. The 'G' with the small 't' stands for 'Gesellschaft,' which is the German for 'Company.' It is a customary contraction like our 'Co.' 'P' of course, stands for 'Papier.' Now for the 'Eg.' Let us glance at our Continental Gazetteer." He took down a heavy brown volume from his shelves. "Eglow, Eglonitz--here we are, Egria. It is in a German-speaking country--in Bohemia, not far from Carlsbad. 'Remarkable as being the scene of the death of Wallenstein, and for its numerous glass-factories and paper-mills.' Ha, ha, my boy, what do you make of that?" His eyes sparkled, and he sent up a great blue triumphant cloud from his cigarette.

Here we are treated to Holmes' amusement at forcing Watson to try his hand at deduction. Holmes hands Watson a letter and asks what Watson thinks of the paper. Watson, rather brilliantly, is able to deduce that the paper is expensive, and that the

note has been written by a well educated, upper class male. Holmes' pride is obvious in his response of: *Ha, ha, my boy.*

Aside from the obviousness of Holmes' excitement, it is curious to note that Holmes, having not seen Watson for some months, and having lost Watson to a wife, possessively refers to him as *my boy*.

Watson's description of the incident is even more particular, for he is found once again referring to Holmes' eyes, this time informing the reader that they *sparkled*. I know of no other male who is so preoccupied by his friend's eyes.

This small exchange is interrupted by the arrival of the King. Watson, uncertain as to his new role in Holmes' life, offers to leave, but Holmes will not hear of it.

Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell.

This order to stay is followed by a confession of need, Holmes automatically validating Watson's role in Holmes' life by admitting he is lost without Watson, comparing him to Boswell, one of the world's foremost biographers, and indeed, half of one of the most intense friendships documented in literature. For a man who does not show emotion openly (and indeed, Watson has told us that love is beyond Holmes' capabilities) this is a particularly open and telling statement for Holmes to make.

This statement also shows how much Holmes values Watson's work, for despite the many times Holmes has downplayed Watson's writing, it is clear here that Holmes sees some value in it; enough that he is willing to compare Watson to Boswell, a celebrated biographer.

Despite Holmes' order to remain, Watson is uncertain, and questions how Holmes' client might feel. Holmes, again revealing the depths of his affection for Watson, states: *Never mind him*, a statement which clearly suggests that Watson is far more important to Holmes than his work.

Indeed, upon the King's arrival, the King does indeed seem uncomfortable with Watson's presence, and requests to speak to Holmes alone. Watson does not hesitate in leaving, and yet, Holmes still places Watson above the career he so cherishes.

I rose to go, but Holmes caught me by the wrist and pushed me back into my chair.

Clearly Holmes is unwilling to allow Watson to leave, perhaps in response to his happiness at finally seeing Watson after these so many months. In fact, he tells the King that it is *both or none*, again demonstrating Watson's importance, and Holmes' desire to once again have Watson by his side. It is evident, then, that Holmes not only missed Watson, but that Holmes feels some sort of protectiveness where Watson is

concerned.

I'm going to deviate for a moment to touch on the theme that runs throughout this story (and indeed, several of the stories). Here, we are once again given a case in which it is a woman who is at fault. A woman who threatens ruin. This is particularly noteworthy in the context of Watson's marriage, for it becomes obvious that Holmes wishes Watson to reconsider a life entrenched with the female sex. Indeed, throughout Canon women are seen as quite problematic. This is quite fascinating when one considers that Holmes never marries, nor does he show any interest in a female character. It is also interesting to note that the majority of the cases which follow this trend occur during Watson's marriage.

To deviate again, this time with reference to dates, it is interesting to note that Watson once again refers to his marriage, only this time he references *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*. His use of the present tense suggests that his marriage occurred after these cases, which again suggests that the wife in question is Mary Morstan.

We are now going to turn to Irene Adler, and examine why so many scholars felt that Holmes was in love with her.

Holmes, having spent the day masquerading as a groom for Adler's estate, returns to Baker Street to relay his experience to Watson. He states:

She is the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet.

Highly suggestive, and used often as proof positive that Holmes was attracted to the woman. However, a second later he reveals:

So say the Serpentine Mews, to a man.

It becomes evident, then, that Holmes has not had the opportunity to see Ms. Adler. Indeed, he is repeating second-hand information.

Seconds later, he refers to Irene Adler's male visitor as *dark, handsome and dashing*. This comes as the result of a first-hand glimpse of the man, and yet no one has suggested Holmes' attraction to Norton. When one puts this into context, the only conclusion one can draw is that the theory that Holmes was in love with Irene Adler is quite flawed.

Holmes continues to relay his findings to Watson, but half way into his recollection, he pauses, and states:

I fear that I bore you with these details.

This is very indicative of Holmes' worry that he might lose Watson's interest. When one ties this in to Holmes' earlier insistence that Watson participate in the case, it

becomes quite evident that Holmes misses Watson's presence and involvement. It is entirely conceivable that Holmes mourned the loss of his Watson upon Watson's marriage.

Watson assures Holmes that he is *following you closely*, a statement which seems to alleviate Holmes' fears, for Holmes immediately picks up where he left off.

Again we are witness to Holmes' description of Norton, Irene Adler's male companion (and later husband). Although Holmes has mentioned that Adler is a lovely woman, he describes Norton as *a remarkably handsome man, dark, aquiline, and moustached*. His description of Norton is far more flattering than any description Holmes gives Irene. It is obvious, then, where Holmes' interests lie, and while his heart may belong to Watson, he is clearly capable of appreciating an attractive man.

It is interesting to note here, too, Holmes' preferences for moustaches.

Upon completing his tale, Holmes announces that he has work to do, and instantly requests Watson's aid. Watson is, of course, delighted to help.

Then I am your man.

I was sure I might rely upon you.

And off the pair go, to stage a dramatic scam in hopes of discovering the whereabouts of the King's photograph. During this time, it is interesting to note that Watson, upon spotting Adler, speaks at length of her beauty, seemingly surprised by it, something that would not have occurred had Holmes implicitly stated her attractiveness. Indeed, throughout the story, Watson speaks more fondly of Adler than Holmes does.

Understandable, perhaps, when one considers that Holmes has spent at best twenty minutes in her presence (a brief glimpse in front of her house, five minutes in the church, and ten minutes inside her house). That he could have fallen in love in such a short span of time is quite preposterous.

Returning to the story, their ruse goes off without a hitch, and Watson, following Holmes' instructions to the letter, waits for his friend on the street corner. Ten minutes later, Watson is joined by Holmes.

Slipping through the crowd I made my way to the corner of the street, and in ten minutes was rejoiced to find my friend's arm in mine.

I fail to see how anyone can read the above passage and still insist that Adler claimed some piece of Holmes' heart. The whole of it belongs, clearly, to Watson.

Satisfied with the progression of the case, Holmes and Watson return to their rooms. Upon returning to Baker Street, Watson tells us:

I slept at Baker Street that night.

A curious thing to do, considering Watson has a wife waiting at home. In fact, Watson makes no mention of his wife, nor does he consider contacting her to let her know where he is. Holmes, it would appear, is far more important to Watson than the woman he has vowed to cherish ‘till death do us part’.

So far, for the Great Detective, the case appears to be running smoothly. That lasts until the next morning, when they arrive at Adler’s to retrieve the photograph, only to discover that she has vanished, along with the King’s picture. Holmes is stunned, and one gets the impression that he has quite put out by Adler’s wit. There is grudging respect there, however, and I suspect that it is this reason (and this reason alone) that he keeps her photograph. It is possible, too, that Holmes anticipated coming up against Adler in the future, and wanted to commit her image to memory, so that he might avoid falling victim to her disguises (the reader will recall a cheeky, *goodnight, Mr. Holmes*) a second time. The cold, callus manner in which he requests the picture is not suggestive of a man in love, but rather, a man slightly annoyed at having been bested.

I very much doubt Holmes’ irritation lasted long, for the case concludes with Holmes setting *off in my company for his chambers*. One can only conclude, then, with:

Ooh, la, la.

The Man with the Twisted Lip

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates The Man with the Twisted Lip in June of 1887. Watson states that the date is 1889, and with the exception of Baring-Gould, all other chronologies agree with this date. It is reasonable to assume, especially given that Watson mentions his marriage, that the case did in fact take place in June of 1889, making Watson's wife Mary Morstan. We find additional evidence for a 1889 date when we examine Neville St. Clair, the character featured within the story. St. Clair was married in 1887, and now has two children; a virtual impossibility using the Baring-Gould chronology. The story was first published in 1891.

Synopsis:

In The Man with the Twisted Lip, Watson leaves the comforts of home and wife to seek out a friend's husband in one of the east-end opium dens. Imagine his surprise, then, when, after finding his patient, Watson stumbles into Holmes, who is disguised as an aging opium addict and immersed in a case. Watson quickly sends his patient home by cab, and then joins Holmes in his latest adventure; locating the whereabouts of one Neville St. Clair, whose frantic wife is desperate for his safe return. Nothing is as it seems, however, and it will take five pillows and an ounce of shag for Holmes to discover that Mr. St. Clair is right under his... lip.

The Subtext:

The case begins with a depiction of domestic life in the Watson household. The interaction between Mary and Watson is quite familiar, and in many ways mirrors a typical evening in Baker Street. There are two ways to examine this. The first suggests that Watson purposely chose a wife who, in her mannerisms and presence, reminded him of Holmes. The second suggests that Watson actively attempts to recreate his life in Baker Street, perhaps without Mary's knowledge. Either way, it is quite telling that Watson would desire his married life to mimic his previous existence with Holmes.

The above scene gives way to one of the great mysteries of Canon. It is here that Mary refers to Watson as James, and as we all know, Watson's name is John. Several scholars have suggested that James was perhaps Watson's middle name, or perhaps a

pet name given to him by Mary. Still others have suggested that Mary was having an affair, and that her lover's name was James. Whatever the reason, it is entirely possible that Watson did not notice the slip, for at the time he seemed quite exhausted from a full day's work.

If we assume the latter theory (that Mary was, indeed, having an affair --and it should be noted that this is by no means a popular theory) then one cannot help but question why. Perhaps she had grown tired of Watson's frequent absence. Perhaps she resented his friendship and close association with Sherlock Holmes. Or perhaps, with intuition only a woman could claim, she knew, long before Watson did, that his heart belonged to another; namely, Sherlock Holmes.

This scene of quiet domestic bliss is interrupted by the arrival of Kate Whitney, a friend of Watson's wife. Her husband, it appears, has been gone some days, and Mrs. Whitney knows exactly where to find him. He is in an opium den on the east side, and she, a lone female, does not feel suited to the task of bringing him home.

Watson immediately offers to go for her, and without so much as a word for his wife, he's off, seeking out Mr. Whitney with the aim of bringing him home.

Watson has no problems finding his friend, but he is surprised to find another friend, this one in disguise; although it's not until Holmes reveals himself that Watson becomes aware of his presence.

I walked down the narrow passage between the double row of sleepers, holding my breath to keep out the vile, stupefying fumes of the drug, and looking about for the manager. As I passed the tall man who sat by the brazier I felt a sudden pluck at my skirt, and a low voice whispered, "Walk past me, and then look back at me." The words fell quite distinctly upon my ear. I glanced down. They could only have come from the old man at my side, and yet he sat now as absorbed as ever, very thin, very wrinkled, bent with age, an opium pipe dangling down from between his knees, as though it had dropped in sheer lassitude from his fingers. I took two steps forward and looked back. It took all my self-control to prevent me from breaking out into a cry of astonishment. He had turned his back so that none could see him but I. His form had filled out, his wrinkles were gone, the dull eyes had regained their fire, and there, sitting by the fire and grinning at my surprise, was none other than Sherlock Holmes.

There are several points of interest to be found in the above passage. We will begin by examining Watson's description of Holmes. As an old man, bent and wrinkled, Watson disregards him, but upon looking back, Watson immediately recognizes the

dull eyes that had regained their fire. By telling us that Holmes' eyes had regained their fire, Watson is stating that Holmes' eyes were usually filled with fire. A curious description when one considers that fire is often associated with passion.

Notice, too, Holmes' delight at finding Watson in this den of depravity. His grin that appears at Watson's surprise. Holmes' surprise is evident here, too, and yet, his happiness at stumbling across his friend (a mere coincidence?) is quite obvious.

Shortly after this encounter, Holmes asks after Watson's friend. Watson, very briefly, explains the situation and tells Holmes that he has a cab waiting, to which Holmes replies:

"Then pray send him home in it. You may safely trust him, for he appears to be too limp to get into any mischief. I should recommend you also to send a note by the cabman to your wife to say that you have thrown in your lot with me. If you will wait outside, I shall be with you in five minutes."

Notice the assumption that Watson will aid Holmes in this latest case. Notice too the demand Holmes makes. He is not asking, or even requesting, but rather telling Watson to send his wife a note and give up all pretext of heading home. It is obvious here that Holmes expects Watson's obedience, but more than that, he requires it, for it is only through this demand that Holmes can be assured of Watson's cooperation. Holmes, it would appear, needs Watson; enough that he's willing to throw propriety to the wind and forgo making a formal request.

The tactic works, as we will soon see, for Watson tells us that:

It was difficult to refuse any of Sherlock Holmes' requests, for they were always so exceedingly definite, and put forward with such a quiet air of mastery.

Holmes, it would appear, carries quite a good deal of weight with Watson. Watson goes on to admit:

I felt, however, that when Whitney was once confined in the cab my mission was practically accomplished; and for the rest, I could not wish anything better than to be associated with my friend in one of those singular adventures which were the normal condition of his existence. In a few minutes I had written my note, paid Whitney's bill, led him out to the cab, and seen him driven through the darkness.

Here particular attention should be given to the phrase: *I could not wish anything better than to be associated with my friend...* The reader will do well to recall that it is late evening, and Watson has just expressed his exhaustion, and indeed, has demonstrated his irritation at being sent out on this late night errand, and yet, within minutes after

meeting Holmes, he is more than willing to cast aside both his wife and his responsibility to Whitney in order to follow Holmes on some unknown errand. Truly, Holmes comes first in Watson's life.

This point brings us to an interesting theory, which was first put forth by Clifton R Andrew, and suggests that Watson's first marriage ended in divorce, an event which can be tied directly to Watson's involvement with Holmes, and indeed, his constant abandonment of his wife for Holmes. When one examines Canon, we see countless instances of this, all of which lend incredible weight to Andrew's theory.

Turning back to the story, Holmes, having secured Watson's cooperation, is now in a position to extend an open invitation. It is curious here that he asks for Watson's aid, rather than demanding it. Their exchange is quite suggestive:

"Now, Watson," said Holmes, as a tall dog-cart dashed up through the gloom, throwing out two golden tunnels of yellow light from its side lanterns. "You'll come with me, won't you?"

"If I can be of use."

"Oh, a trusty comrade is always of use; and a chronicler still more so. My room at The Cedars is a double-bedded one."

This exchange presents several points of interest, and we will now touch on each in turn.

I have briefly mentioned the significance of Holmes asking, rather than demanding Watson's aid. When one re-examines both of these instances, in relation to each other, it is obvious that Holmes first demanded because he was afraid of Watson's answer. By issuing a demand, Holmes could be certain that Watson would agree. By now asking, Holmes already knows Watson's answer, but he extends the courtesy so that, later, upon recalling the situation, Watson will remember that Holmes asked. This automatically removes any negativity which might have presented itself within the situation. Holmes has secured Watson, and has also managed to keep Watson's good faith, all with the addition of a request. Clever. And very telling of just how much Holmes values Watson; not just Watson's time, but Watson's respect and affection, too.

We can next turn to Watson's assurance that he will help, and his statement of: *if I can be of use*. Watson's answer to Holmes' question was already preordained, and yet, Watson still worries that he might not be of use. It is evident here that Watson craves Holmes' reassurance; something that Holmes is only too eager to give.

We turn now to Holmes' response, which presents several interesting elements. It is

important to note the language used by Holmes (trusty comrade, chronicler). With the choice of these expressions, Holmes has told Watson that Watson is both trustworthy and wanted. He has also validated Watson's position in Holmes' life; that of a friend and biographer. It is obvious here that Holmes appreciates every role that Watson plays in his life.

Having secured Watson's aid, Holmes is now free to mention that his room *is a double-bedded one*. While this does imply two beds, it also implies that Holmes is extending an invitation for Watson to spend the night in a shared room. The intimacy of this is staggering. Two grown men, in the Victorian era, one of those men married, and yet they are sharing a room, twin beds likely quite close together. It is apparent here, too, that neither man feels even remotely awkward at the prospect.

Watson, of course, agrees, and the two head out to the home of Mrs. St. Clair. Again we are witness to Watson abandoning his wife for Holmes, not just for a few hours, but overnight, leaving her to warm their marriage bed alone. Watson makes no mention of this, so it is quite obvious that the thought has not crossed his mind; Watson is so preoccupied by Holmes' presence that his wife does not register.

The drive is long, and quiet, until Holmes remarks:

"You have a grand gift of silence, Watson," said he. "It makes you quite invaluable as a companion. 'Pon my word, it is a great thing for me to have someone to talk to, for my own thoughts are not over-pleasant."

Watson has spent the majority of the ride in silent contemplation, despite having no real idea of what the night (or indeed, the next day) might hold. He does not ask, however, content to let Holmes come to the subject in his own time. This is a mark of how well Watson knows Holmes, and indeed, very indicative of the reasons Holmes prefers Watson as a constant companion.

Holmes' statement, then, should not come as a surprise, and yet it does, for here he admits to his loneliness, stating that *it is a great thing for me to have someone to talk to*, something that has obviously been lacking since Watson left him for a wife. We see here, too, how often Holmes uses Watson as a sounding board, and how much Holmes appreciates being able to do exactly that. His use of the word *invaluable* is highly suggestive of just how much Watson means to him.

We turn now to a second theory, this one put forth by Dr. R. Asher in *Holmes and the Fair Sex*. Dr. Asher suggests that Mrs. St. Clair's actions, upon Holmes and Watson's arrival at her home, is not that of a concerned wife, but rather that of a woman with

designs on her guest (namely Holmes). Asher suggests that perhaps this is the reason Holmes insisted Watson accompany him to the house, that perhaps Holmes wished for an intermediate in order to stave off her advances. Indeed, upon their arrival, Mrs. St. Clair seems quite shocked to discover that Watson is now assisting Holmes with the case.

"This is my friend, Dr. Watson. He has been of most vital use to me in several of my cases, and a lucky chance has made it possible for me to bring him out and associate him with this investigation."

Holmes' introduction, then, takes on new meaning, as he is very specific to mention that Watson is his friend, and of vital use. This statement is also quite suggestive, as again Holmes states, quite plainly, the importance of Watson's role in his life and work. Indeed, Holmes seems thrilled by the lucky chance that brought them together.

After catching Mrs. St. Clair up to speed, the two quickly retire for the evening. Watson tells us:

A large and comfortable double-bedded room had been placed at our disposal, and I was quickly between the sheets, for I was weary after my night of adventure.

One can easily imagine Watson, clad only in his night shirt, slipping beneath the sheets, while across the room, Holmes likely paced, sorting through the new information provided by Mrs. St. Clair. It is curious to note the sense of comfort (and indeed, Watson mentions comfort) Watson feels when preparing to spend the night next to his long time companion.

Holmes, of course, does not immediately retire, and I think you will agree that Watson's description of Holmes' activities is quite telling:

In the dim light of the lamp I saw him sitting there, an old briar pipe between his lips, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the corner of the ceiling, the blue smoke curling up from him, silent, motionless, with the light shining upon his strong-set aquiline features.

Again we are treated to Watson's very detailed description of Holmes' appearance. I doubt very much that Watson needed to observe Holmes for long, as it is very likely that he now knew every inch of Holmes in complete detail. Still, he paints his picture, and one gets the impression that Watson will never tire of observing and describing his friend.

Eventually Watson does fall asleep, and he is woken the next morning in, what one would imagine is, a most precarious position.

So he sat as I dropped off to sleep, and so he sat when a sudden ejaculation caused me to

wake up, and I found the summer sun shining into the apartment.

Poor Watson; however will he explain the sheets to the dear Mrs. St. Clair.

Holmes, of course, takes all of this in stride.

"Awake, Watson?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Game for a morning drive?"

"Certainly."

"Then dress. No one is stirring yet, but I know where the stable-boy sleeps, and we shall soon have the trap out." He chuckled to himself as he spoke, his eyes twinkled, and he seemed a different man to the sombre thinker of the previous night.

The above exchange provides several points of interest. The first is the fact that Holmes is once again requesting Watson's aid, and that Watson once again agrees without hesitation. This is particularly interesting in terms of the evolution of their relationship during this case. They begin estranged, Watson obviously spending a good deal of time away from Baker Street and hence not seeing as much of Holmes as he once did, and end in comfortable camaraderie, the pair easily returning to old, familiar patterns.

The second is Holmes' request that Watson dress. This gives us proof that Watson has slept in a nightgown, something that, given the era, would have been considered quite indecent in unfamiliar company. Again, an indication of just how close the two men are.

Finally, we are once again treated to Watson's obsession with Holmes' eyes. Time and time again Watson refers to them, and one cannot help but wonder upon the reasons for Watson's preoccupation.

Watson, having dressed, awaits Holmes' return. He does not wait long, for Holmes appears almost immediately, having long since found the key to unlocking this little mystery.

"Come on, my boy, and we shall see whether it will not fit the lock."

Again we are treated to Holmes' possessive nature as he refers to Watson as *my boy*. Clearly Holmes is well aware of where he ranks in Watson's priorities, and indeed, Holmes seems quite pleased by this.

The two leave shortly after this exchange, and upon arriving at the Bow Street Police Station, they are quickly able to solve the mystery of Neville St. Clair. Holmes, content with the closure of the case, quickly turns to Watson and suggests:

"I think, Watson, that if we drive to Baker Street we shall just be in time for breakfast."

Now, consider: On the previous evening, Watson abandoned his wife, sending her a note at Holmes' suggestion. He then spent the night away from home, providing no real aid to Holmes (aside from acting as a sounding board and providing Holmes with much needed company). He is now intent on heading to Baker Street to breakfast with Holmes. The case is solved. Holmes can have no real need for Watson in regards to Holmes' professional work, and yet Holmes still invites Watson, and it is implied that Watson accepts said invitation. Were I Mrs. Watson, I can safely say that my husband would spend the next fortnight or so sleeping upon the settee.

If we turn back to the knowledge that Watson's participation amounted solely to listening to Holmes and sleeping in a bed next to Holmes, one cannot help but wonder upon Holmes' motives for inviting Watson. It is apparent that Holmes missed Watson, and yet, we are also shown a glimpse of the true usefulness of Watson:

Watson stimulates Holmes. Watson clarifies Holmes' mind. Watson provides a sounding board for Holmes' theories. Without Watson, Holmes is incapable of arriving at the correct solution, and yet, with Watson, Holmes' mind is once again capable of brilliant acts of deduction. Truly, then, one can safely say that Watson represents far more than a mere friend and biographer.

The Five Orange Pips

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Five Orange Pips* in September of 1887. Watson also gives a date of September 1887, but mentions his wife, implying a later date. To complicate matters, throughout the case Watson appears to be living in Baker Street, suggesting that either the date is wrong, the wife non-existent, or that Watson was indeed married before meeting Miss Morstan. Your author tends toward the former, for Watson mentions *The Sign of Four* in past context, implying that the events in this case took place after *The Sign of Four*, which was dated in 1888. The story was first published in 1891.

Synopsis:

The Five Orange Pips tells the tale of John Openshaw, whose family appears to be cursed. His uncle, upon receiving an envelope containing five orange pips, died mysteriously. His estate was left to John Openshaw's father, who, several months later, received this same dire warning and shortly thereafter died of mysterious causes. Openshaw, having inherited his father's estate, has received this same envelope, containing this same strange warning. He arrives at Baker Street to engage Sherlock Holmes in solving the mystery. The case comes too late, however, for John Openshaw, and Holmes' pride is hurt, causing him to seek out Openshaw's killers in vengeance. Sadly, the case is never resolved, as the men responsible, all members of a secret organization with the call sign *K.K.K.*, are feared to have drowned at sea, having never received Holmes' warning, hence having died without realizing the threat which hung over them.

The Subtext:

The case begins with Holmes and Watson, ensconced in Baker Street, gale force winds beating against the windows as the two men occupy their time in separate pursuits. Despite the weather, the two seem quite snug, content to sit near their fire and enjoy one another's company.

This blissful domesticity is interrupted, however, by the ringing of the bell, and given the weather, the two men are greatly confused by who could be calling.

"Why," said I, glancing up at my companion, "that was surely the bell. Who could come

to-night? Some friend of yours, perhaps?"

"Except yourself I have none," he answered. "I do not encourage visitors."

There are several points of interest contained within this exchange. The first is that Watson, once again dwelling in Baker Street, refers to Holmes as *my companion*. There is possessiveness in this statement, but also a deep seeded connection that only two cohabitants could express; further proof that Watson could not have merely been visiting.

Watson then questions whether the individual at the door is some friend of Holmes. Holmes' reply of, *except yourself I have none*, is quite remarkable, for this is one of the only incidences where Holmes admits to having no friends save Watson. Holmes then goes on to confess that he does *not encourage visitors*, a comment which touches upon Holmes' misanthropic nature. It is curious to note then, that despite Holmes' discomfort with people Watson is excluded from this group; an exception, and the only exception, to the rule.

Their mystery caller turns out to be a client, and upon being admitting into the sitting room, he comments that he *fear[s] that I have brought some traces of the storm and rain into your snug chamber*; outside validation of the domestic life which Holmes and Watson led.

The client stays only long enough to relay his case, and upon his leaving, Holmes and Watson immediately begin theorizing on the problem at hand. It is interesting to note here that Holmes is beginning to rely more and more upon Watson before making his deductions. Truly Watson has become an invaluable partner in Holmes' professional life.

Eventually their theorizing gives way to an interesting discussion, where Holmes recounts an incidence from their past.

"If I remember rightly, you on one occasion, in the early days of our friendship, defined my limits in a very precise fashion."

"Yes," I answered, laughing. "It was a singular document. Philosophy, astronomy, and politics were marked at zero, I remember. Botany variable, geology profound as regards the mud-stains from any region within fifty miles of town, chemistry eccentric, anatomy unsystematic, sensational literature and crime records unique, violin-player, boxer, swordsman, lawyer, and self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco. Those, I think, were the main points of my analysis."

Holmes grinned at the last item.

If we assume the Baring-Gould date of 1887, then it has been six years since Watson first wrote that list. A Study in Scarlet was not published until December of 1887, several months after this exchange takes place. This could be construed as further proof that the date Watson gives is incorrect, yet it is curious to note that both Holmes and Watson recall this exchange with some clarity.

Indeed, Holmes' grin at Watson's recollection is a clear indication that Holmes is pleased that Watson would have taken the time to analyze him. This long memory is a mark of the close association and awareness the two men have of each other and their shared history.

After discussing the case for some time, Holmes decides that he has exhausted all possibility for the night. It is interesting to note how quickly Holmes shifts gears, telling Watson:

"There is nothing more to be said or to be done to-night, so hand me over my violin and let us try to forget for half an hour the miserable weather and the still more miserable ways of our fellow-men."

It should be noted that this is not the first, nor will it be the last, occasion on which Holmes has played for Watson. Indeed, this seems to be a common occurrence, and one cannot help but picture Watson stretched out upon the settee, a roaring fire at his side, with Holmes standing over him, playing soft, soothing sounds as they while away the hours.

I'm going to shift gears here and touch on a personal theory. When one considers Baring-Gould's chronology, and the existence of a first wife, one cannot help but notice that Watson often, during this supposed marriage, spends the night in Baker Street. With each instance, Watson tended to mention that his wife was away, visiting an aunt or her mother. One cannot help but question, then, how often this wife was away? And indeed, how long Watson waited before rushing to Baker Street. Had he ever passed the night alone in his home? Or did he immediately seek out Holmes' company with the departure of his wife?

A curious question, one must agree.

It had cleared in the morning, and the sun was shining with a subdued brightness through the dim veil which hangs over the great city. Sherlock Holmes was already at breakfast when I came down.

It is curious, too, to consider that Holmes, despite Watson's absence, has left Watson's room intact.

The arrival of morning brings the morning paper, and Watson finds himself with the unpleasant task of informing Holmes of their client's death. Holmes, as we will see, takes the news quite badly.

We sat in silence for some minutes, Holmes more depressed and shaken than I had ever seen him.

"That hurts my pride, Watson," he said at last.

Of all the incidences where Holmes has demonstrated the absolute trust he places in Watson, this is perhaps the most profound. That Holmes would not be afraid to show this side to Watson, or even to admit to the damage caused by such an outcome, is extremely suggestive. Truly Holmes, a man who guards his emotions well, and always puts forth the best face, has no qualms with Watson witnessing his upset.

After recovering from his shock, Holmes' response immediately shifts to anger, his need for vengeance kicking in. Holmes takes the law into his own hands, discovers the identity of the men who killed his client, and sends them a dire warning. This recklessness comes across as quite personal, and yet Watson endures the entire ordeal with patience and perseverance, a sign that he knows Holmes well, and indeed, trusts Holmes to do what is right.

Sadly for Holmes, the possibility of revenge sinks, along with the ship carrying the wanted murders back to America. Holmes' resulting depression is not shown, and yet one can easily imagine the end result. It is highly likely that Watson spent a good number of days in Baker Street, consoling his friend, and sharing in his friend's grief and frustration.

A Case of Identity

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *A Case of Identity* in October of 1887. While Watson does not give a date, he does reference *The Sign of Four* and *A Scandal in Bohemia* as past events, implying a date sometime after Watson's marriage in *SIGN*. This would imply a date of October 1889. Other chronologies have suggested a date of October 1888 and 1889. *A Case of Identity* was first published in 1891.

Synopsis:

Life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent is the statement that opens *A Case of Identity*. It is said by Holmes, and this pronouncement would prove quite prophetic, as moments later a client arrives, one Mary Sutherland, whose unusual tale is far stranger than anything Holmes could have conceived. Still, the case proves elementary, and Holmes manages to solve it solely by examining a type-written letter.

The Subtext:

"My dear fellow," said Sherlock Holmes as we sat on either side of the fire in his lodgings at Baker Street, "life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent. We would not dare to conceive the things which are really mere commonplaces of existence. If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings, the cross-purposes, the wonderful chains of events, working through generations, and leading to the most outre results, it would make all fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable."

So begins *A Case of Identity*, and the above passage contains several points of interest. Ignoring the use of *my dear*, for we have touched on this in previous stories⁵, one must examine Watson's reference to Baker Street as Holmes' lodgings. It is obvious here that the two men are now living apart (Watson's marriage having precipitated Watson's removal from Baker Street) and yet it is curious to note how often Watson finds himself in Baker Street. One cannot help but wonder why Watson never thought to spend any

time at home with his wife.

Clearly, he preferred Holmes' company to hers, and yet, it seems reasonable to assume that Mrs. Watson would have demanded at least a little of her husband's time. Using this assumption, it is evident that Watson either ignored her wishes in favour of spending time with Holmes, or neglected to mention his whereabouts, leaving her with no recourse for finding him. Neither of these scenarios paints the picture of a happily married man.

The second feature of interest is the phrase: *fly out of that window hand in hand*. One must agree that this is a highly curious and, indeed, a highly suggestive thing for Holmes to say. That he might desire to engage his time *hand in hand* with Watson is indicative of the bond and affection that existed between the two men. Holmes, the reader will recall, was not one for displays of affection, and yet, time and time again we have seen his tactility where Watson is concerned.

Their discussion lasts for some time, and one gets the impression that this is a game they play often; Watson attempting to debunk Holmes' theories, Holmes plainly explaining them to Watson's amazement. Indeed, the entire exchange ends with:

"Take a pinch of snuff, Doctor, and acknowledge that I have scored over you in your example."

One cannot help but picture the gloating smile upon Holmes' face, or the rueful shake of Watson's head upon realizing that his friend is correct. This competitiveness on Holmes' behalf and acute patience on Watson's is one of the cornerstones of their relationship, bringing to mind long-time married couples who squabble solely for their own amusement.

Their banter is interrupted by the arrival of a client, still standing outside on the pavement. Holmes rises from his chair to glance out the window. Watson, we shall soon see, does not hesitate to follow.

He had risen from his chair and was standing between the parted blinds gazing down into the dull neutral-tinted London street. Looking over his shoulder...

From all accounts, the sitting room at Baker Street had at least two windows. One would imagine that the woman standing outside on the street corner could have been easily viewed through either, and yet, Watson chooses to stand directly behind Holmes and lean over his shoulder in order to peer out the window. One cannot help but question Watson's motives here. Was this merely unplanned curiosity on Watson's behalf, or did he have some more definitive reason for wanting to press himself against Holmes'

backside?

Having made her decision to come inside, their client finally appears. Holmes, after extending the usual courtesies, introduces Watson. This is particularly interesting, as the client has shown no curiosity or confusion over Watson's presence. In fact, this introduction seems to come out of nowhere.

"This is my friend, Dr. Watson, before whom you can speak as freely as before myself."

The reader will recall that Holmes had previously informed us that, save for Watson, he had no friends⁶. Curious, then, that Holmes frequently refers to Watson, or introduces Watson, as his friend. One can imagine the importance this title carries for Holmes, and why he so often felt the need to emphasize it.

I want to turn now from the story to discuss an adage of Holmes which can be used by the student of subtext when examining Canon. In the midst of Holmes' interview with Miss Sutherland, Holmes states:

"It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important."

Here we must thank Holmes for providing us with so handy a key.

When analyzing Holmes and Watson's relationship, one must examine the little things. The looks and touches, which to the untrained eye appear quite innocence, are, in fact, laden with subtext. The subtle language used by Holmes and Watson when referring to one another, again, to the untrained eye, appears quite transparent, and yet, to the student of subtext, it becomes quite opaque, each word carrying hidden meaning. Subtext, by its very definition, refers to this hidden meaning. It is quite interesting, then, that Holmes should point his reader in the right direction.

Returning to the story, and the departure of Miss Sutherland, Holmes, upon her leaving, immediately returns to their game, asking Watson to describe their visitor. Watson does, much to Holmes' amusement.

Sherlock Holmes clapped his hands softly together and chuckled.

"Pon my word, Watson, you are coming along wonderfully. You have really done very well indeed. It is true that you have missed everything of importance, but you have hit upon the method, and you have a quick eye for colour. Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details."

There is such pride in Holmes' voice. Such admiration; that Watson should try, knowing he is risking failure, and that Watson's talents have developed so far must have

thrilled the Great Detective. Beneath all of this, though, lies affection, for regardless of how far off Watson's deductions are, Holmes holds Watson in the highest of regards, never tiring of Watson's blunders.

Naturally, Holmes feels the need to elaborate on exactly why Watson was wrong, and despite having been proven wrong, Watson does not appear hurt; indeed, he states:

"And what else?" I asked, keenly interested, as I always was, by my friend's incisive reasoning.

Watson, it would appear, is quite adoring of Holmes, and doesn't mind being proven wrong; not if it means being able to hear Holmes speak at length on his incisive reasoning.

The day comes to an end, and Watson returns for home, leaving Holmes to his thoughts and his pipe. The next day Watson admits to being occupied by his practice, and yet:

It was not until close upon six o'clock that I found myself free and was able to spring into a hansom and drive to Baker Street, half afraid that I might be too late to assist at the denouement of the little mystery.

The moment Watson's professional duties free him, he is in a cab, traveling to Baker Street. When cannot help but wonder what Mrs. Watson thought of this, for aside from slipping into their shared bed, likely after Mrs. Watson had fallen asleep, Watson has not seen her in days. He spends his days in practice, and his nights with Sherlock Holmes. I know of no woman who would tolerate this behaviour for long.

Upon arriving at Baker Street, Watson *found Sherlock Holmes alone, however, half asleep, with his long, thin form curled up in the recesses of his armchair.*

Note Watson's description of Holmes. The care in which Watson describes his friend. The attention to detail contained within this single passage. Watson, it would appear, despite legally belonging to another, is still quite obsessed with Holmes. Indeed, there is something decidedly stalkerish in his observation of Holmes.

Within short order, Holmes reveals that he has solved the case, and indeed, moments later Miss Sutherland's stepfather appears, and Holmes is able to retell how he went about fooling his step daughter in order to maintain access to her wealth (which he would have lost had she married). Holmes seems quite upset the man's conduct, going so far as to threaten the man with a horse-whipping.

"The law cannot, as you say, touch you," said Holmes, unlocking and throwing open the door, "yet there never was a man who deserved punishment more. If the young lady has a

brother or a friend, he ought to lay a whip across your shoulders. By Jove!" he continued, flushing up at the sight of the bitter sneer upon the man's face, "it is not part of my duties to my client, but here's a hunting crop handy, and I think I shall just treat myself to--" He took two swift steps to the whip, but before he could grasp it there was a wild clatter of steps upon the stairs, the heavy hall door banged, and from the window we could see Mr. James Windibank running at the top of his speed down the road.

This is clearly a man who knows something of love; clearly a man who has experienced love. Holmes' anger at Mr. Windibank's behaviour is quite suggestive of the value Holmes places on love. One cannot help but question, then, who it is that fills this role in Holmes' life. In our analysis of *A Scandal in Bohemia*, we have discounted Irene Adler, so who remains, then, save Watson?

The Red-Headed League

Dates:

The Red-Headed League is perhaps the most difficult of all the cases to date. Baring-Gould dates the case in October of 1887. Watson, however, tells us that the case occurred *in autumn of last year*, and given that The Red-Headed League was published in August of 1891, this would imply a date in the autumn of 1890. Things get more complicated, however, when the client reads from a newspaper dated April 27, 1890, and Watson tells us this is *just two months ago*, implying a date of June 27, 1890. This confusion continues, when, upon the same day, the client produces a sign which reads:

*THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE
IS
DISSOLVED.
October 9, 1890.*

The client discovered this sign on the same day that he sought out Holmes' aid, which implies that the case began on October 9, 1890.

None of this accounts for Baring-Gould's date of 1887, and it should be noted that Baring-Gould's date is not popular with other chroniclers. Given that Watson references autumn, and the fact that Red-Headed League was dissolved in October, it is reasonable to assume a date of October 9, 1890. The newspaper dated April 27 is likely a typo, where August was read by the publisher as April.

Synopsis:

Jabez Wilson, a pawnbroker, is noted for his fiery red hair. In fact, it is this hair which lands him a much coveted position in the Red-Headed League, where he earns a staggering four pounds a week copying entries from the Encyclopaedia Britannica. This stroke of good fortune doesn't last long, however, for upon arriving for work one morning, Wilson discovers that the league has been dissolved. That same day he seeks Holmes' aid in uncovering the truth of the matter. Little does Wilson realize that the case runs deeper than it first appears; straight under Wilson's pawnshop and into the cellar of the bank across the street.

The Subtext:

Watson, married and living away from his old rooms in this case, arrives at Baker Street to find Holmes engaged by a client. His first instinct is to leave, but Holmes quickly prevents this from happening. Watson tells us:

With an apology for my intrusion, I was about to withdraw when Holmes pulled me abruptly into the room and closed the door behind me.

A curious beginning to the case. Here, one cannot help but question why Holmes was standing next to the door; if perhaps he was anticipating Watson's arrival, or, if upon seeing Watson, Holmes sprung from his chair and dashed to Watson's side. Either way, the entire scene is quite suggestive of just how deep Holmes' need for Watson runs. That Holmes would pull Watson into the room and close the door behind him solely to prevent Watson from leaving is quite remarkable.

"You could not possibly have come at a better time, my dear Watson," he said cordially.

"I was afraid that you were engaged."

"So I am. Very much so."

"Then I can wait in the next room."

Again we are shown Holmes' delight at having Watson once again in Baker Street. Indeed, Holmes' reaction is quite excitable, but that is not what makes this passage interesting.

Examine, if you will, Watson's offer to *wait in the next room*. Most scholars agree that Watson's room was up a flight of stairs. We know, too, that Holmes' bedroom sat directly off the sitting room. It is obvious, then, that Watson has just offered to wait in Holmes' bedroom.

Now, keeping in mind that Watson very frequently appears on Holmes' doorstep to aid him with his cases, is it not unusual that, in this instance, Watson feels as though he is intruding? If Watson did not come to engage in a case, then why did he come? And why would he need to wait in Holmes' bedroom? This entire exchange conjures images of a Victorian era booty call.

Holmes, of course, consumed by a case, pushes both his and Watson's libido to the background, insisting that Watson stay to help with the case. In fact, he remarks to his client:

"Not at all. This gentleman, Mr. Wilson, has been my partner and helper in many of my most successful cases, and I have no doubt that he will be of the utmost use to me in yours also."

Again an indication of just how much Holmes values Watson's aid and assistance. Here, Holmes himself admits that Watson has been instrumental in solving the majority of Holmes' successful cases. Clearly, Holmes has come to know and appreciate Watson's usefulness.

Their relationship, however, goes beyond mere usefulness in a professional setting. Indeed, the pair share many common interests; the cornerstone of a many a successful marriage.

"I know, my dear Watson, that you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the conventions and humdrum routine of everyday life. You have shown your relish for it by the enthusiasm which has prompted you to chronicle, and, if you will excuse my saying so, somewhat to embellish so many of my own little adventures."

"Your cases have indeed been of the greatest interest to me," I observed.

The reader can easily imagine that it is this shared love which first brought the two men together. Indeed, this shared love is likely what bound them together throughout the many decades of their close association.

That is not to say, however, that their relationship was without the occasional spat. Indeed, Holmes can be quite trying at times, and one cannot help but wonder how Watson tolerated his occasional fits of boasting.

"You did, Doctor, but none the less you must come round to my view, for otherwise I shall keep on piling fact upon fact on you until your reason breaks down under them and acknowledges me to be right."

Here we are presented with a typical scene. Holmes' need to be right and to have his superiority validated is something that Watson offers with an amused grin and an affectionate glance. This scene of domestic squabbling is again reminiscent of a marriage, and brings to mind the inevitable conflicts which arise in every relationship; as well as the love needed to overcome such things.

Holmes is not alone in wanting to score one on Watson. Indeed, several times throughout Canon Watson attempts to best Holmes at his own game. Sadly, for Watson, Holmes is more than well aware of Watson's attempts.

Sherlock Holmes' quick eye took in my occupation, and he shook his head with a smile as he noticed my questioning glances.

The above is in reference to Watson's attempts at reading Holmes' client. Here we can safely say that, were Holmes less aware of Watson, one can easily imagine that Watson might have succeeded where Holmes had failed. Again, sadly for Watson (but not

the reader) Holmes seems to be perpetually aware of Watson. Indeed, one can almost picture Holmes constantly glancing out of the corner of his eye whenever Watson is around.

Watson's confusion does not dissipate, however; in fact, it grows stronger as their client hands over a curious advertisement found in *The Morning Chronicle*.

"What on earth does this mean?" I ejaculated after I had twice read over the extraordinary announcement.

Holmes chuckled and wriggled in his chair, as was his habit when in high spirits.

Here we can only shake our head and admonish: now, now, boys; there is a client in the room.

Jacob Wilson continues his story, and upon reaching his conclusion, Watson tells us:

Sherlock Holmes and I surveyed this curt announcement and the rueful face behind it, until the comical side of the affair so completely overtopped every other consideration that we both burst out into a roar of laughter.

Such ease between the pair; such playfulness. Is it any wonder that they chose to share the bulk of their lives with one another?

Shortly after reassuring their client that, yes, they did take the problem quite seriously, their client leaves, leaving Holmes and Watson to enjoy one another's company.

"What are you going to do, then?" I asked.

"To smoke," he answered. "It is quite a three pipe problem, and I beg that you won't speak to me for fifty minutes." He curled himself up in his chair, with his thin knees drawn up to his hawk-like nose, and there he sat with his eyes closed and his black clay pipe thrusting out like the bill of some strange bird. I had come to the conclusion that he had dropped asleep, and indeed was nodding myself, when he suddenly sprang out of his chair with the gesture of a man who has made up his mind and put his pipe down upon the mantelpiece.

"Sarasate plays at the St. James's Hall this afternoon," he remarked. "What do you think, Watson? Could your patients spare you for a few hours?"

"I have nothing to do to-day. My practice is never very absorbing."

"Then put on your hat and come. I am going through the City first, and we can have some lunch on the way. I observe that there is a good deal of German music on the programme, which is rather more to my taste than Italian or French. It is introspective, and I want to introspect. Come along!"

Holmes, having obtained a successful solution for the moment, immediately puts

the case aside and requests that Watson join him for a concert. This is particularly curious, as Holmes is usually known for his single-mindedness when involved in a case. It is suggestive, then, that Holmes would choose to dismiss the case in favour of taking Watson out on a date.

Notice too Watson's remark that his practice is never very absorbing. One cannot help but wonder if Watson intentionally chose a light practice in order to make time for Holmes. One must also question whether Watson's wife knew of Watson's limited practice, or whether she was under the assumption that Watson was busy doctoring when in reality he was with Holmes in Baker Street.

Their date is delayed slightly, Holmes choosing to first investigate the scene of the crime. Upon completing his investigation of Wilson's pawnshop, Holmes remarks:

And now, Doctor, we've done our work, so it's time we had some play. A sandwich and a cup of coffee, and then off to violin-land, where all is sweetness and delicacy and harmony, and there are no red-headed clients to vex us with their conundrums."

Play, indeed.

My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer but a composer of no ordinary merit. All the afternoon he sat in the stalls wrapped in the most perfect happiness, gently waving his long, thin fingers in time to the music, while his gently smiling face and his languid, dreamy eyes were as unlike those of Holmes the sleuth-hound, Holmes the relentless, keen-witted, ready-handed criminal agent, as it was possible to conceive. In his singular character the dual nature alternately asserted itself, and his extreme exactness and astuteness represented, as I have often thought, the reaction against the poetic and contemplative mood which occasionally predominated in him. The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy; and, as I knew well, he was never so truly formidable as when, for days on end, he had been lounging in his armchair amid his improvisations and his black-letter editions. Then it was that the lust of the chase would suddenly come upon him, and that his brilliant reasoning power would rise to the level of intuition, until those who were unacquainted with his methods would look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals. When I saw him that afternoon so enwrapped in the music at St. James's Hall I felt that an evil time might be coming upon those whom he had set himself to hunt down.

I am tempted to leave Watson's description as it stands, without analyzing it in its entirety, as I feel it is rather suggestive on its own. I will, however, point out several interesting passages.

I want first to draw your attention to Holmes' happiness, as expressed by Watson. That Holmes was an avid music love is without question, yet, there is something more suggestive in this description. Could it be that Holmes' happiness stemmed from spending an afternoon by his friend's side, listening to the sweet, romantic melody of a violin as it serenaded them?

Notice, too, Watson's description of Holmes' gently smiling face and languid, dreamy eyes. Quite descriptive, I am sure you will agree, and hardly the description a man might give a mere friend. Then there is Watson's reference to Holmes' poetic mood, a clear attempt at romanticizing Holmes.

Beyond even these examples, one must examine the long consideration Watson gives his friend and companion, and indeed, the intimate knowledge of Holmes that Watson displays. Clearly this attention goes beyond mere friendship.

Sadly, their outing must come to an end, and then it is back to business, Holmes requesting Watson's aid, which Watson readily gives.

"Very well. And, I say, Doctor, there may be some little danger, so kindly put your army revolver in your pocket."

The reader will undoubtedly recall several instances where Holmes has relied upon Watson's proficiency with a firearm to provide protection. As I have mentioned before, this is a very clear indication of trust, and indeed, dependence. That Holmes should put his life entirely in Watson's hands is quite telling.

Watson agrees, and the two part ways, arranging to meet up at Baker Street at ten o'clock. Watson leaves his home and wife at quarter past nine for another long night at Holmes' side. Upon arriving at Baker Street, Watson is surprised to discover the presence of Inspector Jones, of Scotland Yard, and an unknown man who is later revealed to be the bank director. Particular attention should be given to Jones' comment upon Watson's arrival.

"We're hunting in couples again, Doctor, you see," said Jones in his consequential way.

The reader will not be surprised to discover, then, that Holmes and Watson make up one of these *couples*.

The four head out in separate cabs, arriving at the bank before being led down into its cellar. There, they are forced to wait in the dark for countless hours. This scene is particularly intense, and Watson tells us:

My limbs were weary and stiff, for I feared to change my position; yet my nerves were worked up to the highest pitch of tension, and my hearing was so acute that I could not only

hear the gentle breathing of my companions...

Here one cannot help but picture Holmes and Watson, crouched together in the dark, perhaps leaning against one another for support, Watson trembling with nerves, Holmes with excitement. It is easy to imagine the tension building until, at last, the trap is sprung, Holmes catching his man.

And sometime later, as morning dawns over the horizon, Holmes and Watson once again find themselves in Baker Street.

"You see, Watson," he explained in the early hours of the morning as we sat over a glass of whisky and soda in Baker Street...

Interesting, is it not, the implication that Watson has once again spent the night away from his wife? And yet, despite this, and the successful conclusion of the case, Watson does not head home, instead choosing to return to Baker Street with Holmes and remain there for, from what the reader can tell, the remainder of the morning. In fact, it is entirely possible that Watson stayed even longer.

One cannot help but question, then, if in fact there ever was a wife. That any woman should tolerate this behaviour is unheard of, and yet, time and time again Watson is seen abandoning his wife for Holmes; staying out at all hours of the night, sleeping in his old quarters at Baker Street, and, indeed, spending countless hours with his old friend and companion, Sherlock Holmes.

In fact, Mrs. Watson does not seem to cross Watson's mind, as he seems quite content to sit and drink with Holmes.

"You reasoned it out beautifully," I exclaimed in unfeigned admiration. "It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true."

"It saved me from ennui," he answered, yawning. "Alas! I already feel it closing in upon me. My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so."

"And you are a benefactor of the race," said I.

Clearly, it is Holmes, and Holmes alone, who holds Watson's interest and admiration.

The Adventure of the Dying Detective

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Dying Detective* in November of 1887. Watson does not reference a date, but does mention that he was in the second year of married life. For those that consider Mary Morstan to be Watson's first (and possibly only) wife, this would imply a year of 1890 (Watson's first year of marriage in 1889, his second in 1890). The story was first published in 1913.

Synopsis:

The case begins with Watson, who has just been summoned by a frantic Mrs. Hudson, as he rushes from his home to his friend's side in Baker Street. Upon arriving, Watson is confronted by the truth of Mrs. Hudson's statement; that Holmes is, indeed, near death's door. He has apparently contracted a deadly, contagious disease, and will not allow Watson to doctor to him. There is another who can help, however; one Mr. Culverton Smith, who has good reason to despair Holmes' recovery. An ivory box, an overheard confession, and the lighting of the gas are all that are needed to bring this murderer to justice, and to speed Holmes to a full recovery.

The Subtext:

This is perhaps one of the better stories in demonstrating the intensity of Watson's emotional connection to Holmes. Here, Watson is confronted with the possibility of losing Holmes, and his reaction, one can imagine, is quite telling.

The beginning of the story, however, belongs to Mrs. Hudson.

Mrs. Hudson, the landlady of Sherlock Holmes, was a long-suffering woman. Not only was her first-floor flat invaded at all hours by throngs of singular and often undesirable characters but her remarkable lodger showed an eccentricity and irregularity in his life which must have sorely tried her patience. His incredible untidiness, his addiction to music at strange hours, his occasional revolver practice within doors, his weird and often malodorous scientific experiments, and the atmosphere of violence and danger which hung around him made him the very worst tenant in London. On the other hand, his payments were princely. I have no doubt that the house might have been purchased at the price which Holmes paid for his rooms during the years that I was with him.

There is an usual fondness in Watson's description of Holmes. Here he is remarking on Holmes' undesirability as a tenant, and yet, one recalls that Watson spent some years sharing rooms with Holmes; an indication that Watson likely found Holmes' singular habits quite endearing. Then there is Watson's reference to Holmes' rental payments. He states that they were princely, and one cannot help but wonder how Watson came to know the sum of Holmes' rent (which had undoubtedly changed upon Watson's leaving). Recall that the two men have been living apart for some time, and yet, despite Watson's absence, he is obviously still very much aware of Holmes' financial situation. It is fairly safe to state, then, that the two men are close enough, and indeed, trusting enough, to discuss openly such a sensitive topic.

Despite Holmes' shortcomings, Mrs. Hudson was quite fond of Holmes. Indeed, Watson tells us that Holmes *had a remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women*. He goes on, however, to say that Holmes *disliked and distrusted the sex*, a usual statement, to be sure. We have seen Holmes to be quite trusting of men; indeed, Holmes' even seems to enjoy the company of men, and yet, he has always demonstrated a cold shoulder where women are concerned. One cannot help but question if this was in any way a reflection of Holmes' personal preferences. Could Holmes' disinterest in women stem from a sexual interest in men?

Pure speculation on our behalf, but it is certainly an interesting theory.

We turn our attention now to Watson, for truly this is Watson's story.

He's dying, Dr. Watson.

So begins Watson's involvement in the Adventure of the Dying Detective, and while we have seen Watson's affection for Holmes, his respect for Holmes, his appreciation for Holmes, and even his love for Holmes, one does not truly get a sense of how dear Holmes is to Watson without first reading this tale.

'With your leave or without it, Mr. Holmes, I am going for a doctor this very hour,' said I. 'Let it be Watson, then,' said he.

Holmes has been ill some days now, and yet, despite Mrs. Hudson's pleading, Holmes has refused a doctor until now. It is curious to note (although this particular request, when taken in context with the remainder of the story, is understandable) that Holmes requests Watson. While some would argue that this was done solely to appease Mrs. Hudson, or because Holmes knew that he could exert his influence over Watson, one cannot help but wonder if perhaps this was simply Holmes' way of including Watson in the case. Time and time again we have seen evidence of Holmes' need for Watson

when it comes to his professional matters.

I was horrified for I had heard nothing of his illness. I need not say that I rushed for my coat and my hat.

One can practically picture Watson's terror here. That he might lose Holmes, his closest and dearest friend, is beyond his comprehension. His first instinct is to rush to Holmes' side, and it is interesting to note that Watson, in his haste and worry, does not think to tell his wife of his leaving.

He was indeed a deplorable spectacle. In the dim light of a foggy November day the sick room was a gloomy spot, but it was that gaunt, wasted face staring at me from the bed which sent a chill to my heart.

We too feel a chill in our hearts, and yet one would imagine that Watson's first reaction, being a trained doctor, would be to seek Holmes out and begin a diagnosis. This is not the case, however; Watson is so overcome by fear and grief that he is effectively paralyzed. Truly, Watson is entirely too attached to the patient to think rationally.

He lay listlessly as I entered the room, but the sight of me brought a gleam of recognition to his eyes.

There is both worry and hope in this sentence, and while the reader knows the outcome of the story (understands that Holmes immediately recognized Watson) it is curious to note that Watson takes the time to reference this. That Watson would notice it is telling, too, for *a gleam of recognition* is not an easy thing to catch. Clearly, then, Watson has been watching Holmes intently.

"Well, Watson, we seem to have fallen upon evil days," said he in a feeble voice, but with something of his old carelessness of manner.

"My dear fellow!" I cried, approaching him.

"Stand back! Stand right back!" said he with the sharp imperiousness which I had associated only with moments of crisis. "If you approach me, Watson, I shall order you out of the house."

"But why?"

"Because it is my desire. Is that not enough?"

I have chosen to include this entire exchange, for it is quite telling in several regards. First, we have Holmes telling Watson that *we have fallen on evil days*. A more grammatically correct sentence would have been *I have fallen on evil days*, and yet Holmes distinctly says *we*. It is obvious that he knows (or perhaps desires) that their lives are so intertwined that what one experiences the other instantly shares.

We see here, too, Watson breaking out of his reverie. His cry of, *my dear fellow!* as he approaches the bed is quite heartfelt and speaks to the love Watson holds for Holmes.

Holmes, of course, will have none of Watson's ministrations, telling Watson to stand back. Watson, confused, asks why, to which Holmes replies, *it is my desire*. There is a strong suggestion here that Holmes expects Watson to accede to Holmes' wishes. Indeed, this statement suggests that Holmes takes Watson's instant cooperation for granted, an indication that Holmes is used to Watson's deference.

"I only wished to help," I explained.

"Exactly! You will help best by doing what you are told."

"Certainly, Holmes."

He relaxed the austerity of his manner.

"You are not angry?" he asked, gasping for breath.

Poor devil, how could I be angry when I saw him lying in such a plight before me?

Watson seems torn between obeying Holmes' desire and attending his friend. This conflict of emotions is quite fascinating, because while we are used to seeing Watson defer to Holmes' wishes, in this instance, Watson seems set to disobey Holmes. This could only occur in the most gravest of circumstances, where something other than Holmes' respect and admiration is at stake. In this case, it is Holmes' very life, something which undoubtedly rates high on Watson's list of priorities. Indeed, I do suspect that he would risk losing Holmes' friendship in order to preserve Holmes' life.

Holmes' question deserves particular attention, for it is quite curious in its own right. That Holmes' primary concern would be Watson's anger is quite indicative of Holmes' need for Watson's love. He does not wish to anger his friend, and yet he can't allow his friend to aid him in his recovery. Clearly, Watson is not the only one fighting warring emotions. It is interesting to note here, too, that Holmes is quite aware of Watson's emotional state, a sign of how in-tuned to Watson Holmes is.

"Contagious by touch, Watson--that's it, by touch. Keep your distance and all is well."

"Good heavens, Holmes! Do you suppose that such a consideration weighs with me of an instant? It would not affect me in the case of a stranger. Do you imagine it would prevent me from doing my duty to so old a friend?"

That Watson would risk death to aid Holmes is quite possibly the most beautiful thing I have ever read.

Holmes, of course, will have none of it, leaving Watson to state:

I have so deep a respect for the extraordinary qualities of Holmes that I have always

deferred to his wishes, even when I least understood them. But now all my professional instincts were aroused. Let him be my master elsewhere, I at least was his in a sick room.

That Watson respects Holmes is not in question; we have known this from the moment the pair met. That Watson's professional instincts would be aroused is also not in question, for Watson is a doctor and I am certain all doctors would react in this manner. Watson's last sentence, however, is exceedingly suggestive.

Let him be my master elsewhere. This, I do believe, is the first, and possibly only, time in which Watson acknowledges that Holmes is his master. Clearly this is a man in complete and utter awe.

Holmes, frustrated by Watson's lack of cooperation, turns to his last available recourse: he insults Watson's talents as a doctor, questions his qualification and indicates his lack of trust in Watson's medical skills.

I was bitterly hurt.

One can well imagine, but the tactic works, and Watson agrees that he will no longer attempt to minister to Holmes. He does not give up so easily, however, insisting:

But someone you MUST have, and that is final. If you think that I am going to stand here and see you die without either helping you myself or bringing anyone else to help you, then you have mistaken your man."

I confess; this passage brings tears to my eyes. That Watson cares enough to allow Holmes to insult him, and still refuses to allow Holmes to die is one of the most touching scenes in all of Canon. The passage ends beautifully, Watson confessing for the entire world to see that he is Holmes' man.

This Holmes agrees to, and Watson immediately turns towards the door, bent on seeking out aid immediately.

I turned resolutely to the door.

Never have I had such a shock! In an instant, with a tiger-spring, the dying man had intercepted me. I heard the sharp snap of a twisted key. The next moment he had staggered back to his bed, exhausted and panting after his one tremendous outflame of energy.

"You won't take the key from me by force, Watson, I've got you, my friend. Here you are, and here you will stay until I will otherwise."

This is a particularly amusing scene, for one cannot help but wonder how it was that Watson failed to deduce the truth behind Holmes' illness. Still, for our purposes, Watson's surprise is less fascinating than Holmes' statement:

I've got you, my friend.

Here we have Holmes essentially kidnapping Watson. Watson is now being held against his will. Putting this into context, it is interesting to note that, while Holmes has obviously planned this down to every detail, he seems quite pleased that he should be forced to pass an afternoon locked in his bedroom with Watson.

Watson, we will soon see, quickly adapts to the situation, without raising an outcry, or even a protest. In the span of a heartbeat he has resigned himself to the situation, and then proceeds to settle in for a long vigil. Indeed, he passes most of the two hours confined in Holmes' room observing his friend.

I had stood for some minutes looking at the silent figure in the bed.

This is especially curious when one considers that Watson is currently under the assumption that Holmes is asleep. With Watson watching Holmes sleep, and Holmes locking Watson in his bedroom, I honestly can't tell which of the pair should be labelled the stalker, and which the stalkee.

Then, unable to settle down to reading, I walked slowly round the room, examining the pictures of celebrated criminals with which every wall was adorned. Finally, in my aimless perambulation, I came to the mantelpiece. A litter of pipes, tobacco-pouches, syringes, pen-knives, revolver-cartridges, and other debris was scattered over it. In the midst of these was a small black and white ivory box with a sliding lid. It was a neat little thing, and I had stretched out my hand to examine it more closely when--

It was a dreadful cry that he gave--a yell which might have been heard down the street. My skin went cold and my hair bristled at that horrible scream. As I turned I caught a glimpse of a convulsed face and frantic eyes. I stood paralyzed, with the little box in my hand.

"Put it down! Down, this instant, Watson--this instant, I say!" His head sank back upon the pillow and he gave a deep sigh of relief as I replaced the box upon the mantelpiece. "I hate to have my things touched, Watson. You know that I hate it. You fidget me beyond endurance. You, a doctor--you are enough to drive a patient into an asylum. Sit down, man, and let me have my rest!"

To Watson, Holmes' outrage must appear as irritation, and yet, the reader sees deeper meaning; which will indeed prove to be correct, for we later learn that the box which Watson was handling was deadly.

Taking this new knowledge into context, one must then re-examine Holmes' frantic worry. If Watson had opened the box, he would have contracted the deadly disease Holmes claims to suffer from. Holmes knows this. He knows too that there is no

known cure and that death is certain. Faced with the peril of his only friend, Holmes is only too quick to leave behind his role of dying man and assume the role of protector. Holmes' reaction allows us a brief glimpse into just how deep Holmes' love for Watson runs.

This incident is quickly replaced by Holmes releasing Watson. He sends him with instructions to fetch one Culverton Smith, cautioning Watson to return alone and before Mr. Smith. Watson, although slightly confused and loath to leave his friend, agrees to Holmes' request.

Don't forget, Watson. You won't fail me. You never did fail me. No doubt there are natural enemies which limit the increase of the creatures. You and I, Watson, we have done our part.

Reading the above passage, one cannot help but suspect that Holmes has been failed by every meaningful person in his life. Every person that is, except for Watson. Watson has never failed Holmes, and Holmes knows this, and one cannot help but wonder if this played any part in Holmes falling in love with Watson.

Watson, bent on his task, heads out in search of Mr. Smith. Upon arriving at his residence, Culverton Smith refuses to see him. Watson's reaction, we will see, is quite lacking in the propriety Watson usually reserved.

I thought of Holmes tossing upon his bed of sickness and counting the minutes, perhaps, until I could bring help to him. It was not a time to stand upon ceremony. His life depended upon my promptness. Before the apologetic butler had delivered his message I had pushed past him and was in the room.

Clearly nothing will stop Watson from aiding Holmes.

His ploy works, for Smith is instantly aroused by Holmes' name, and immediately agrees to attend Holmes in Baker Street. Watson, following Holmes' instructions to the letter, manages to return to Baker Street alone, and we will soon see this is not done without trepidation.

It was with a sinking heart that I reentered Holmes's bedroom. For all that I knew the worst might have happened in my absence.

There is such worry and fear in the above passage. Such despair, and yet one cannot help but feel the intense love behind Watson's worry.

He finds Holmes in much the same state he left him, although slightly clearer of mind. Watson informs Holmes that Mr. Smith is on his way, to which Holmes requests that Watson leave the scene. Watson, naturally, refuses, but Holmes convinces him that

he would be better off concealed during Mr. Smith's visit.

There is just room behind the head of my bed, Watson."

"My dear Holmes!"

We are shocked as Watson, as Holmes can, on occasion, cast his propriety to the wind.

Watson's hesitation prompts an even more telling statement from Holmes. He tells Watson that there is no other way, and then, upon hearing a foot upon the stairs, shouts:

Quick, man, if you love me!

It is interesting to note that it is this that gets Watson moving. Indeed, he practically jumps, his actions answering Holmes' question, stating clearly that, yes, he does indeed love the Great Detective.

Watson, safely in hiding, is now able to overhear the conversation between Smith and Holmes. Here, he learns that Holmes' condition is the fault of Mr. Smith, and that the box he had only recently been admiring was, in fact, triggered to administer a deadly disease.

Likely horrified, Watson remains in his hiding place, listening with rapt attention to the confession Smith gives. He never once betrays Holmes' request, despite what I am certain would have been a great desire to leap out and strangle the man he felt responsible for Holmes' impending death. Clearly Watson's desire to prove his love was far greater than any need for vengeance.

Watson, however, will soon find himself surprised, for moments after turning up the gas, Smith asks if Holmes requires anything else.

"A match and a cigarette."

I nearly called out in my joy and my amazement. He was speaking in his natural voice--a little weak, perhaps, but the very voice I knew.

Watson's relief is coupled with our own, and yet, I highly doubt that any man, or woman, would be capable of equalling Watson's happiness.

Still Watson waits, until Smith points out that it is Holmes' word against his own. This prompts Holmes to call out his friend and make proper introductions.

"Good heavens!" cried Holmes. "I had totally forgotten him. My dear Watson, I owe you a thousand apologies. To think that I should have overlooked you!"

Holmes, of course, has not forgotten Watson, but it is interesting to note that Holmes expresses incredulity at the possibility of having forgotten Watson.

Some time later, after the police have escorted Smith away, Holmes is recovering from his self imposed three day fast. He expresses concern here that Watson may have taken offence to Holmes' deceit. Watson, of course, has not, but requires a full explanation, one which Holmes is more than willing to give, particularly on the topic of why he refused to allow Watson near him.

"Can you ask, my dear Watson? Do you imagine that I have no respect for your medical talents? Could I fancy that your astute judgment would pass a dying man who, however weak, had no rise of pulse or temperature? At four yards, I could deceive you. If I failed to do so, who would bring my Smith within my grasp? No, Watson, I would not touch that box. You can just see if you look at it sideways where the sharp spring like a viper's tooth emerges as you open it. I dare say it was by some such device that poor Savage, who stood between this monster and a reversion, was done to death. My correspondence, however, is, as you know, a varied one, and I am somewhat upon my guard against any packages which reach me. It was clear to me, however, that by pretending that he had really succeeded in his design I might surprise a confession. That pretence I have carried out with the thoroughness of the true artist. Thank you, Watson, you must help me on with my coat. When we have finished at the police-station I think that something nutritious at Simpson's would not be out of place."

Within the span of a paragraph Holmes has apologized, made everything clear, and managed to invite Watson to dinner. While I am certain Watson was slightly hurt by Holmes' refusal to include him in his master plan, I have no doubt that, somewhere over the course of appetizers, Watson forgave him, and the two likely fell into familiar conversation. The rest of the evening, one can imagine, was spent simply enjoying one another's company.

Side notes:

While this is the first story which warrants a side note, writers of slash fanfiction may be interested in the following passage:

With vaseline upon one's forehead, belladonna in one's eyes, rouge over the cheek-bones, and crusts of beeswax round one's lips, a very satisfying effect can be produced.

The term Vaseline was first coined in 1870. By 1873 it was being used by couples under the false belief that it destroyed spermatozoa and hence would prevent pregnancy. It is reasonable to assume, then, that homosexual men of the time would have also used this product as a form of lubrication.

The Blue Carbuncle

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* in December of 1887. It is noteworthy to point out that Baring-Gould admits to being alone in his choice of dates. Other chroniclers have suggested dates in December of 1889, and 1890. Watson does not give a year, telling us only that the case began two days after Christmas. Watson also tells us that he is visiting Holmes, implying that Watson is presently married and living away from Baker Street. Indeed, Holmes mentions Watson's wife in passing, further evidence to support a later date. The story was first published in January, 1892.

Synopsis:

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle is a festive tale, providing the reader with an inside glimpse at Christmas in Baker Street. Here, Holmes has apparently passed the holiday season contemplating an old, battered hat, which was brought to him by Police Commissioner Peterson. It was accompanied by a goose, which Holmes sent home with the Police Commissioner, so that it might fulfill its Christmas destiny. What begins as a small problem of intellectual interest, soon becomes a much more sinister problem when Peterson returns to Baker Street, this time with a precious blue stone in hand, which he claims to have found inside the goose's crop. Holmes immediately recognizes the stone as the famed Blue Carbuncle, which was recently stolen from the Countess of Morcar. Armed with his battered hat, Holmes sets about finding the thief, a task which will lead him throughout wintry London, and end with a decision that both shocks and appals Watson.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle begins with Watson visiting Holmes over the Christmas season. Indeed, the entire tale takes place two days after Christmas, and, despite Watson's marriage, he seems quite keen to pass the holiday season away from his wife.

This is a reoccurring theme in Canon, and yet, there is something increasingly significant in Watson's abandonment of his wife at this time of the year. We will return to

this, and the rest of the story, in a moment. First, however, we are going to deviate to touch on a point of interest, one which occurs in the first paragraph of the story.

He was lounging upon the sofa in a purple dressing-gown...

Many students of subtext have mistakenly pointed out Holmes' choice of colour in dressing gowns as evidence of homosexual subtext. It should be noted that the colour purple (or more accurately, lavender) did not become a symbol of gay pride until the late 1960s, well after Holmes' time. "Purple Power" was a slogan used during the Stonewall riots, and afterwards, the colour purple became associated with gay pride and was used as a symbol to indicate an individual's sexual preferences. Victorians had their own symbols, which included, but were not limited to: green carnations, poodles, red neckties and red handkerchiefs. Holmes' purple dressing-gown, then, is simply that; a dressing-gown.

Returning to the story, Watson, having arrived at Baker Street, automatically remarks that Holmes is occupied, and questions whether or not he is interrupting. Holmes' response, we will see, is quite telling.

"You are engaged," said I; "perhaps I interrupt you."

"Not at all. I am glad to have a friend with whom I can discuss my results."

Time and time again we see Watson worrying over whether he is interrupting Holmes, and time and time again Holmes reassures Watson that he is glad for Watson's company. This is interesting, for despite Watson's constant worry, he continues to visit Holmes, and despite Holmes' constant need to give reassurance, he is more than willing to do so. The formality that formed between the two men during Watson's absence from Baker Street is very indicative of the discomfort both men felt at living apart. It is temporary, however, for soon after Holmes' reassurance Watson settles into his usual role of helper and chronicler.

Here we also see Holmes' ever increasing loneliness. Prior to Watson's marriage, Holmes could turn to Watson at any moment for companionship, and yet, after Watson's marriage, Holmes depended upon Watson visiting (in Watson's own time) in order to satisfy any social needs. This lends new weight to Holmes' statement that he is *glad to have a friend with whom I can discuss my results*. Indeed, Holmes is telling us here that he is simply glad to have someone to talk to.

I seated myself in his armchair and warmed my hands before his crackling fire, for a sharp frost had set in, and the windows were thick with the ice crystals.

Here is a curious situation. Watson, having arrived at Baker Street and ascertained

that his visit is welcome, does not choose to claim his old chair. Indeed, he claims Holmes' chair (Holmes, the reader will recall, is currently sprawled upon the sofa). This is curious, for one would imagine that Watson, either by habit or some sense of propriety, would immediately choose the chair reserved for him. That he does not, and in fact, that he chooses to sit in Holmes' chair, is perhaps an indication of Watson's need for a connection with Holmes.

Watson, comfortably seated, then begins asking after the hat Holmes has been studying. Holmes, always keen to test Watson's skills at deduction (indeed, we have seen Holmes and Watson play this particular game countless times) immediately hands Watson his lens and states:

Here is my lens. You know my methods. What can you gather yourself as to the individuality of the man who has worn this article?"

It is clear here that Holmes is eager to engage in a discussion with Watson, for one can easily imagine the banter, which usually came as a result of such an inquiry, was a source of great amusement for Holmes. Again, we are privy to Holmes' loneliness, for he seems unusually excited to test Watson's skills.

Watson, of course, is unable to deduce anything from the hat, a confession that prompts Holmes to state:

"On the contrary, Watson, you can see everything. You fail, however, to reason from what you see. You are too timid in drawing your inferences."

Note that Holmes does not tell Watson that he is incapable of reasoning, but rather, that he is too timid in drawing his inferences. This suggests that Holmes is quite aware of Watson's capabilities, but recognizes Watson's inferiority complex, which constantly causes Watson to understate his own abilities. Watson is far more intelligent than he would have us believe, and Holmes appears to both know and value this aspect of Watson's personality.

Holmes, however, does not insist that Watson step beyond his comfort level, instead immediately pointing out all of the inferences which he has drawn from the hat. The entire exchange is riddled with playful banter, and one can easily picture the amused grin Holmes must have worn at once again being able to point out his skills to Watson.

"Well, it is very ingenious," said I, laughing; "but since, as you said just now, there has been no crime committed, and no harm done save the loss of a goose, all this seems to be rather a waste of energy."

The above is said in quite the teasing tone, and it should be noted that Watson is not the only one laughing during this exchange. Indeed, Holmes seems in excellent spirits, a mood which lasts until the Police Commissioner's return.

The arrival of Police Commission Peterson sees Holmes springing into action, for it appears as though the goose is no ordinary goose: most geese do not hide rare and precious blue gems within their crops. It is shortly after Peterson's leaving, and Holmes' statement that nothing more can be done until he hears something of the advertisements he has placed (through Peterson) in the evening papers, that Watson takes his leave. Holmes, upon Watson's announcement that he is to return to his rounds, comments:

"Very glad to see you. I dine at seven."

We already deduced that Holmes was quite glad to see Watson, and yet it is curious to note here Holmes' invitation. Recall, as was stated above, that this is the holiday season, and yet, despite knowing that Watson's wife will likely expect him for dinner, Holmes invites Watson to join him for the evening meal. Watson, of course, immediately agrees, without so much as a moment's consideration for his wife.

Watson returns to Baker Street shortly after six-thirty. There, he meets Mr. Henry Baker, the owner of the hat and goose. Holmes, remarking upon Watson's return, states:

Ah, Watson, you have just come at the right time.

This is curious statement, and one cannot help but wonder if Holmes was anxiously awaiting Watson's return. That Watson should arrive several minutes late from his stated time of return undoubtedly vexed Holmes; Holmes, as we have seen, relies and depends on Watson during all of his cases.

Mr. Baker, it would appear, knew nothing of the precious stone hidden within his bird's crop. Holmes is obviously quite disappointed by this news, and yet, he extends the necessary courtesies, sending Mr. Baker off with his hat and a replacement goose. Almost immediately following his departure, Holmes is eager to follow the trail Mr. Baker has provided.

"Are you hungry, Watson?"

"Not particularly."

"Then I suggest that we turn our dinner into a supper and follow up this clue while it is still hot."

"By all means."

Note that Holmes' first concern is the state of Watson's appetite. One can well imagine that if Watson's response had been different, Holmes would have first suggested that they finish dinner; Holmes, on countless occasions, has put Watson's needs above his own.

Watson, however, is more than willing to forgo a meal in order to assist Holmes in one of his cases.

Their trail takes them throughout the icy streets of London, Watson following Holmes through dozens of streets as Holmes works on forging his chain. Despite the briskness of the weather, and the late hour, Watson does not complain, content to follow Holmes to the ends of the earth if need be. Mr. Baker leads them to an inn, which leads them to a dealer in Covent Garden Market, which leads them to a town supplier on Brixton Road. They do not need to travel to Brixton Road, however, for soon a new avenue of investigation presents itself.

Holmes follows this new lead swiftly, with Watson in tow, and soon they are back in the snug embrace of Baker Street, this time accompanied by a Mr. James Ryder, the head attendant at the Hotel Cosmopolitan, the scene of the Blue Carbuncle's theft.

Ryder confesses to having committed the crime, begging mercy in the most pathetic way possible. His plea holds some sway with Holmes, who, shortly after hearing Ryder's tale, tells him to *get out*, much to Watson's astonishment. Holmes is quick to explain, however:

"After all, Watson," said Holmes, reaching up his hand for his clay pipe, "I am not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies. If Horner were in danger it would be another thing; but this fellow will not appear against him, and the case must collapse. I suppose that I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul. This fellow will not go wrong again; he is too terribly frightened. Send him to jail now, and you make him a jail-bird for life. Besides, it is the season of forgiveness. Chance has put in our way a most singular and whimsical problem, and its solution is its own reward. If you will have the goodness to touch the bell, Doctor, we will begin another investigation, in which, also a bird will be the chief feature."

It is interesting here that Holmes feels the need to explain his actions. One cannot help but imagine that this was for Holmes' benefit, more than Watson's, for undoubtedly Holmes worried over Watson's opinion on the matter. That Holmes would feel the need for such a long-winded explanation is quite indicative of his need for Watson's respect and approval. Indeed, Holmes makes particular note to mention the season,

hoping, one can assume, to appeal to Watson's romantic nature, something which is highly suggestive in and of itself.

While the above passage concludes the story, it is pertinent to remark now on one of Baring-Gould's theories. As we have seen above, Baring-Gould suggests a date of December 1887, suggesting that the wife in question was an unknown first wife. If we assume this date, and indeed, the existence of a first wife, then we must also note Baring-Gould's theory that this wife died in late December, early January of 1887/1888. If this is the case, then, not only do we have Watson abandoning his wife for Holmes (as he has done countless times), but we also have Watson abandoning a potentially ill wife in favour of Holmes. While this goes against Watson's very nature, and indeed, provides proof against Baring-Gould's date/theory, one cannot help but speculate on the potential for Baring-Gould's correctness. If, in fact, Baring-Gould is correct, and Watson is married, and the year is correct, then Holmes truly comes first in Watson's life. So much so that Watson is willing to abandon an ailing wife for Holmes' company.

Alternatively, we can assume Baring-Gould's theory on date and wife and make the deduction that it was not death which separated Watson from the wife in question, but rather a divorce; an interesting theory in its own right.

The Valley of Fear

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Valley of Fear* in January of 1888. Most chronologists, however, place the case later in Holmes' career. There is some evidence to suggest that Baring-Gould's date is correct. Watson is living in Baker Street, and unmarried in this adventure, suggesting a date either before or after *Mary Morstan*. The fact that Watson mentions the late 80s in his narrative suggests a time before *Mary*. Even more suggestive is the presence of Moriarty, whom the reader will recall fell to his death in 1891, a date which precludes dating the adventure after *Mary Morstan*. There is also some suggestion that this case took place shortly after the release of *A Study in Scarlet*, as several characters mention Watson's writing. *A Study in Scarlet* first appeared in Beeton's *Christmas Annual* in December of 1887, nearly a month before this case is said to have taken place. *The Valley of Fear* was first published in the *Strand Magazine* between 1914 and 1915.

Synopsis:

The Valley of Fear is one of four Sherlock Holmes novels, written by Arthur Conan Doyle. Like *A Study in Scarlet*, the book is divided into two parts; the first half following Holmes' investigation of a murder, the second half shifting to a third person account of the events which led up to the murder. *The Valley of Fear* begins with a dire warning from one of Holmes' informants, a man simply known as Porlock, who is the one exploitable link in Moriarty's chain. Despite this warning being written in cipher, with no key, Holmes and Watson are quickly able to translate the message and discover that danger threatens a man by the name of John Douglas. Unfortunately for Holmes, the message comes too late, as Holmes quickly discovers that Douglas has been murdered. Holmes heads out to the scene, only to discover that the entire case hinges on a missing dumbbell. The discovery of said dumbbell leads to the discovery of Douglas, alive and well. It is only some time later, after reading Douglas' account of the events leading up to the mystery (presented to the audience in a third person narrative entitled, *The Scowrers*) that Holmes discovers that Douglas is still in grave danger. Unfortunately for Holmes, his insight comes too late, and Holmes, who knows a Moriarty when he sees one, can only ask for more time, knowing that one day he will

have his revenge upon the man behind Douglas' eventual murder.

The Subtext:

The Valley of Fear begins with an examination of domestic life in Baker Street. Here we are given a glimpse of Holmes and Watson in the midst of their daily routine, passing the time between cases with banter and observation. There is an air of sarcasm in Holmes' tone, and indeed, frustration in Watson's, and one cannot help but wonder at the reasons behind this obvious tiff.

Their conversation, however, quickly turns to deduction. Holmes has just received an encrypted letter, which he is eager to decipher for it comes from an employee of Holmes' nemesis, Professor Moriarty.

"You have heard me speak of Professor Moriarty?"

"The famous scientific criminal, as famous among crooks as -- "

"My blushes, Watson!" Holmes murmured in a deprecating voice.

"I was about to say, as he is unknown to the public."

"A touch! A distinct touch!" cried Holmes. "You are developing a certain unexpected vein of pawky humour, Watson, against which I must learn to guard myself."

While scholars have often debated this comment on the grounds that Watson, in The Final Problem (which took place some three years after The Valley of Fear) does not appear to know Moriarty, our interest here stems from the playfulness of the exchange. Holmes, used to Watson's constant state of awe, automatically assumes that Watson intends to compliment him. That Watson is able to demonstrate such wit, and that his correction instantly places Holmes on his guard, is quite delightful. Indeed, one cannot help but wonder if this correction was Watson's means of getting even for Holmes' earlier sarcasm.

We also get the impression that Holmes is quite proud of Watson for his touch, and yet there is an underlying sense of nervousness, Holmes uncertain how to deal with this particular Watson; an indication, perhaps, that Holmes is well aware of how close he has allowed Watson to get. That Holmes should fear this intimacy is quite suggestive, for Canon has often depicted Holmes as a fairly reserved individual, and one can only imagine the nervous tension that would arise with the introduction of an intimate relationship.

Unable to reconcile these emotions, Holmes quickly turns the topic back to Moriarty, vowing almost feverishly that he shall some day contribute to Moriarty's down-

fall.

"But if I am spared by lesser men, our day will surely come."

"May I be there to see!" I exclaimed devoutly.

Watson, as we observe, is more than willing to stand at Holmes' side when this occasion comes, the devotion in his statement quite telling, especially when one considers that Watson has earlier stated that he is one of the *most long-suffering of mortals*.

We see here, too, Holmes' assumption that Watson will be by his side, Holmes' reference to *our day* indicating that Watson has become an integral part of Holmes' work, and indeed, life. Holmes appears to know, too, Watson's devotion, for his statement is an assumption, not a request.

The Valley of Fear is also quite remarkable in that it showcases Watson's intelligence. One can easily imagine the pride Holmes must have felt upon allowing Watson to deduce, and having Watson deduce correctly.

"But no chain is stronger than its weakest link."

"Exactly, my dear Watson!"

There is a distinct note of smugness in Holmes' tone, suggesting that he expects no less from Watson, and yet is still quite thrilled to hear Watson echo his thoughts.

Here Holmes and Watson turn their attention to decrypting the letter Holmes has received. The task is not an easy one, for the key has not been provided.

Again Holmes flattened out the paper upon his unused plate. I rose and, leaning over him, stared down at the curious inscription...

The above statement is quite interesting, for Holmes has already read the inscription, and could have very easily handed the paper to Watson. Instead, Holmes keeps the paper in front of him, forcing Watson to stand directly behind him and glance over his shoulder. One cannot help but wonder at Holmes' motives here. Although several explanations present themselves, it is entirely probable that Holmes desired Watson's closeness. This speaks to Holmes' need for Watson's physical presence. That Watson does not question this behaviour, but instead seems quite willing to drape himself over Holmes' back, is quite telling.

Indeed, the physical proximity of the two men is mirrored by an emotional closeness, with Holmes, on several occasions, complimenting Watson and indicating his extreme gladness at having Watson as a companion.

Brilliant, Watson. You are scintillating this morning.

Quite a suggestive statement, especially when one considers how closely the entire

exercise in decoding the cipher resembles an interaction between tutor and student. Holmes' pride is continuously noticeable, and Watson's pleasure at receiving Holmes' praise is quite obvious. There is fondness in the exchange, but perhaps more telling, there is acute affection which seems to sparkle between the two men.

Indeed, even when Watson begins to doubt his talents, Holmes is only too quick to encourage him.

Surely you do yourself an injustice.

Holmes is very careful here not to reveal his own conclusions, instead leading Watson, coaxing him until he arrives at the same conclusion, after which Holmes states:

Excellent, Watson! I am very much mistaken if you have not touched the spot.

There is such pride in Holmes' words, and one gets the impression that nothing thrills Holmes more than knowing how far Watson has come in the art of deduction. The entire exchange is even more telling when one considers Holmes' earlier apprehension. Despite an obvious fear of intimacy, Holmes seems unable to shut Watson out, an indication of just how ingrained in Holmes' life Watson has become.

Of course, Holmes and Watson's deduction does not quite bring about the solution they were looking for. Holmes seems quite depressed by this, and Watson is quick to adopt Holmes' mood, something which suggests a high level of empathy between the two men.

He had spoken in jesting vein, but the twitching of his bushy eyebrows bespoke his disappointment and irritation. I sat helpless and unhappy, staring into the fire.

Fortunately, the answer proves relatively simply, and Holmes is quickly able to once again put them on the right track.

Their investigation is interrupted by the arrival of Inspector MacDonald, a Scotland Yard detective that Holmes seems quite fond of. Indeed, Watson tells us:

Holmes was not prone to friendship, but he was tolerant of the big Scotchman, and smiled at the sight of him.

While this is largely due to Holmes' appreciation of MacDonald's skills as an Inspector, it is curious to note here that Watson tells us that Holmes is not prone to friendship. He does not state that Holmes considers MacDonald a friend, but rather, that Holmes is tolerant of the man, a suggestion which indicates that Watson was, in fact, Holmes' only friend.

MacDonald is the first to tell Holmes of Douglas' death, and seems surprised that Holmes knows something of the matter. Holmes quickly explains the cipher they re-

ceived, indicating that it forewarned them of the danger Douglas was in. As the facts of the case come to light, Holmes is only too eager to follow MacDonald to Birlstone, the site of the murder.

Upon arriving in Birlstone, the men are met by a Sussex detective by the name of White Mason, who states:

There are some bits that will come home to you, Mr. Holmes, or I am mistaken. And you also, Dr. Watson; for the medicos will have a word to say before we finish. Your room is at the Westville Arms.

This statement contains two curious suggestions. The first is that Mason, a detective unknown to both Holmes and Watson, assumed that the two would arrive together. Indeed, he calls them both by name long before they are formally introduced. The second is that he has secured a *room* for them at the local inn. That this detective would know that Holmes would arrive with Watson is curious, but that he would assume they would be sharing a room is something else entirely.

I want to deviate now from the story at hand to touch on a curious subplot. The Valley of Fear revolves around the death of one John Douglas. John Douglas has a long time friend and companion, Mr. Cecil Barker. The two appear quite close; indeed, Watson tells us:

He was the more noticed as being the only friend of the past unknown life of Mr. Douglas who was ever seen in his new English surroundings. Barker was himself an undoubted Englishman; but by his remarks it was clear that he had first known Douglas in America and had there lived on intimate terms with him. He appeared to be a man of considerable wealth, and was reputed to be a bachelor.

And, Mr. Barker, when speaking of Mr. Douglas, states:

He was fond of me -- no man could be fonder of a friend. And he was devoted to his wife. He loved me to come here, and was forever sending for me. And yet if his wife and I talked together or there seemed any sympathy between us, a kind of wave of jealousy would pass over him, and he would be off the handle and saying the wildest things in a moment. More than once I've sworn off coming for that reason, and then he would write me such penitent, imploring letters that I just had to.

One cannot help but wonder if Mr. Douglas' jealousy stemmed not from Barker's interaction with his wife, but rather from his wife's interaction with Mr. Barker. Whatever the cause of Douglas' jealousy, there appears to have been quite an intimate relationship between Douglas and Barker; enough that Barker left America and fol-

lowed Douglas to England. These subtextually heavy subplots exist throughout Canon, and one cannot help but wonder if this was done intentionally in an effort to direct the reader's attention to Holmes and Watson's relationship, and the unusual closeness which existed between them.

Turning back to Holmes and Watson, it appears as though their friendship is now so well known that the public at large is easily able to identify Watson without requiring an introduction.

We thought that it was probably you, as your friendship with Mr. Sherlock Holmes is so well known.

While some scholars have suggested that this is a direct result of Watson's writing, it should be noted that The Valley of Fear took place only a few short weeks after the release of A Study in Scarlet, a novel which, by all accounts, was not popular. Indeed, Holmes as a character did not become popularized until the release of A Scandal in Bohemia, which appeared in The Strand Magazine in 1891, some three years after the events in The Valley of Fear. Curious, then, to note that Holmes and Watson's relationship is so infamous that they are now assumed to travel together. One cannot help but wonder how often the pair made for idle gossip and dinner conversation. Truly, the public at large were already well aware of the subtle truth behind their relationship.

Holmes and Watson remain in Sussex for some time, Holmes investigating largely on his own, while Watson awaits Holmes' return at their inn.

He had spent the whole afternoon at the Manor House in consultation with his two colleagues, and returned about five with a ravenous appetite for a high tea which I had ordered for him.

Note here that it is Watson who, anticipating Holmes' return, orders high tea. A decidedly thoughtful, not to mention domestic thing to do.

With Holmes' return, the two immediately begin discussing the case, Watson still shrouded by perpetual darkness, Holmes immensely thrilled at being able to watch Watson attempt to struggle his way through the confusing evidence.

He sat with his mouth full of toast and his eyes sparkling with mischief, watching my intellectual entanglement.

Aside from Watson's now commonplace obsession with Holmes' eyes, we see here Holmes' love of the dramatic. Watson has always made for the best of audiences, something which undoubtedly delighted Holmes.

Holmes, eventually taking pity on Watson, begins to explain in earnest, pausing

only briefly to state:

"You may argue -- but I have too much respect for your judgment, Watson, to think that you will do so..."

Here we have undisputed proof of the respect Holmes afforded Watson. Indeed, on several occasions Holmes has noted his respect for Watson's intelligence, and this is no exception. Truly, Holmes considered Watson an equal when it came to intellectual matters.

Their discussion turns to Mrs. Douglas, a topic which causes Holmes to state:

"I am not a whole-souled admirer of womankind, as you are aware, Watson."

This is not the first time Holmes has stated, rather plainly, his distaste for women. It warrants repetition, however, for aside from alluding to Holmes' sexual preferences, this statement also suggests that Watson is somehow familiar with these preferences; a sign, perhaps, that Holmes and Watson's relationship has shifted to something entirely more intimate?

Watson takes Holmes statement in stride, and asks if Holmes suspects Mrs. Douglas of murder. Holmes seems quite shocked by this, for he is used to subtlety from Watson; indeed, the whole of their relationship demands subtlety.

"There is an appalling directness about your questions, Watson," said Holmes, shaking his pipe at me. "They come at me like bullets."

While at first glance the above statement speaks only to the case and to Watson's assumption that Mrs. Douglas and Mr. Barker were responsible for the murder of Mr. Douglas, upon a second reading, it becomes evident that Holmes' shock stems from something far more subtle. The Victorians were not known for their directness, tending to hide meaning within metaphors and imagery. So encoded was the Victorian language that even modern day Victorian scholars seem hard pressed to unravel it. It should not come as a surprise, then, to note that Holmes is referring to Watson's presumption in this statement, rather than his assignment of blame. Watson, a man of propriety, would very rarely speak so bluntly, and Holmes, unprepared for this new side of Watson, is uncertain how to reply. The comfort level between them has shifted; Watson's openness and willingness to state his thoughts so plainly are clear indications that their relationship has reached a new level, one which very likely frightened Holmes.

Indeed, so overcome by this shift is Holmes that he immediately requests an evening alone with his thoughts. Watson, as we will see, is quite incredulous.

"Well, if there were an outsider, he may be traced and taken. That would be the most effective of all proofs. But if not -- well, the resources of science are far from being exhausted. I think that an evening alone in that study would help me much."

"An evening alone!"

This retreat of Holmes lends further proof to the above point, suggesting that Holmes is not yet prepared for the ramifications of this subtle shift in his relationship with Watson. That Watson would express outrage at Holmes' desire to spend a night alone is quite telling of the emotional dependency Watson has developed, and, indeed, of the growing frustration that came with trying to maintain an intimate relationship with Holmes.

Beyond Watson's shock, there is also an element of fear and worry.

"Certainly -- but what a wretched weapon! If there is danger -- "

"Nothing serious, my dear Watson, or I should certainly ask for your assistance."

Note Holmes' reassurance that he would take Watson if he felt there was some danger. This is a clear indication of trust, and Holmes' means of reassuring Watson of his place in Holmes' life. Here Holmes has clarified that he does not intend to dissolve their union, but rather, that he simply requires a moment to gather his thoughts.

It was late that night when Holmes returned from his solitary excursion. We slept in a double-bedded room, which was the best that the little country inn could do for us. I was already asleep when I was partly awakened by his entrance.

"Well, Holmes," I murmured, have you found anything out?"

He stood beside me in silence, his candle in his hand. Then the tall, lean figure inclined towards me. "I say, Watson," he whispered, "would you be afraid to sleep in the same room with a lunatic, a man with softening of the brain, an idiot whose mind has lost its grip?"

"Not in the least," I answered in astonishment.

"Ah, that's lucky," he said, and not another word would he utter that night.

The above passage presents several points of interest. Note first that Watson states that they slept in a double-bedded room. He does not state that they slept in separate beds. In fact, he goes on to state that this was the best the little country inn could do for them. That Watson should want for a single double bed, rather than two twin beds is not only possible, but entirely probable.

Note too Watson's description of Holmes standing over him. The intimacy of this scene is really quite striking, and one cannot help but notice Holmes' whispering, an act which would have required the two men to be quite close.

Then there is Holmes' question, and Watson's reassurance; Watson cares not that Holmes might have lost his sense of reason, only that Holmes has come home. The final passage is even more suggestive, leaving a vacant space in the reader's mind to fill in exactly what Holmes passed the night doing that required the absence of words.

Indeed, the morning following this scene shows us a cheerful Holmes, content and satisfied with the current state of affairs, despite the presence of a still open case. What else, then, could have caused Holmes' good mood? Recall that sex, in any form, but particularly sex between two men, was a fairly taboo subject during the Victorian Era (these were the same people who covered their table legs to avoid thinking of sex) and so, often in literature, sex was alluded to but never openly discussed. In fact, sex was often disguised within coded language. These codes can be applied to the above sentence, where Holmes mentions, quite frankly, insanity, a condition which was often associated with homosexual sex.

Nowhere in Canon will we see an open reference to sex (recall that Doyle never once mentions physical relations between Dr. Watson and his wife Mary, and yet the reader can easily presume that they existed), but we are presented with several suggestive scenes indicative of an instance where sex may have occurred. Clearly, decoding the subtext takes on new meaning when one examines the innuendo hidden within the Victorian language.

Holmes laughed. "Watson insists that I am the dramatist in real life," said he.

Veiled references to sex notwithstanding, I am certain the reader will agree that the above quote is very suggestive. Such a statement sounds suspiciously like something a wife would say of her husband, not something a friend would say of his companion.

The story eventually shifts, giving way to Douglas' story of The Scowrers, but before Watson relinquishes his pen, he assures us:

And when I have detailed those distant events and you have solved this mystery of the past, we shall meet once more in those rooms on Baker Street, where this, like so many other wonderful happenings, will find its end.

Watson paints a very romantic picture of Baker Street here, and one cannot help but picture Holmes and Watson, seated across from one another next to the fire, perhaps sharing in the smoking of pipes, as Watson reads the strange tale which follows Watson's statement, Holmes listening with a contented air.

The Adventure of the Yellow Face

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Yellow Face* in April of 1888. There is little evidence to refute this date, and so it is considered by most scholars to be accurate. The story was first published in 1894.

Synopsis:

Returning from an impromptu stroll, Holmes and Watson discover that they have missed a visitor. Holmes is quite put out by this, as it has been some months since he last had the occasion to exercise his most singular gifts. Fortunately, the visitor has left his pipe, and from this alone Holmes is able to draw a rough summary of the man he would soon come to meet. Indeed, Grant Munro returns a short time later, requesting Holmes' advice in the matter of his wife, whom he has reason to believe is concealing something from him. In a rare turn of events, Holmes theory proves not to be the correct one, and the answer to Mrs. Munro's late night visits to a country cottage prove to be far more innocent than anyone could have suspected.

The Subtext:

Watson prefaces *The Adventure of the Yellow Face* with a rather curious note. He states:

In publishing these short sketches based upon the numerous cases in which my companion's singular gifts have made us the listeners to, and eventually the actors in, some strange drama, it is only natural that I should dwell rather upon his successes than upon his failures

While one can easily understand Watson's stated reasons for focusing on Holmes' successes, rather than his failures, one cannot help but question whether there is not something more in Watson's motives. Watson admits in *The Sign of the Four* that he began writing Holmes' cases in an effort to please Holmes. One can therefore assume that Watson felt that this was best done by focusing on Holmes' triumphs. Indeed, Watson has also told us that Holmes was not immune to flattery. It seems reasonable, then, to suggest that Watson's choice of tales is directly related to Watson's need for Holmes' approval. Indeed, Watson, through the subtle art of flattery, appears to use his stories solely to appease Holmes, perhaps as some misguided form of wooing.

Sherlock Holmes was a man who seldom took exercise for exercise's sake. Few men were capable of greater muscular effort, and he was undoubtedly one of the finest boxers of his weight that I have ever seen; but he looked upon aimless bodily exertion as a waste of energy, and he seldom bestirred himself save when there was some professional object to be served. Then he was absolutely untiring and indefatigable. That he should have kept himself in training under such circumstances is remarkable, but his diet was usually of the sparest, and his habits were simple to the verge of austerity.

Here is a curious statement which raises a very interesting question: How did Holmes and Watson keep in such good training, despite the passage of months between cases? It is clear that neither seemed prone to exercise, and yet, when there was a criminal to catch, or a trail to follow, both men were well up to the task. Clearly there was some other form of physical exercise which kept the pair in peak physical condition, and yet was never committed to paper. Note too Watson's familiarity with Holmes' body (muscular effort) and Holmes' stamina (untiring and indefatigable). I am certain I need not state the obvious here.

One day in early spring he had so far relaxed as to go for a walk with me in the Park, where the first faint shoots of green were breaking out upon the elms, and the sticky spear-heads of the chestnuts were just beginning to burst into their five-fold leaves. For two hours we rambled about together, in silence for the most part, as befits two men who know each other intimately.

The case for a physical relationship gains evidence, as Watson's description of their walk clearly contains a distinct air of romance. Note Watson's description of the first faint shoots of green, and his reference to sticky spear-heads. Then there is his reference to chestnuts bursting into their five-fold leaves. The innuendo buried within this description is undeniable. Strengthening our case, Watson then tells us that *for two hours we rambled about together* leaving one to wonder upon the definition of ramble. Indeed, Watson clarifies his meaning within the same sentence, reminding the reader that the pair *know each other intimately*. Truly, this is one of the more blatant examples of subtext found within Canon. So obvious is it, in fact, that one hardly needs to resort to decryption in order to glimpse the true meaning behind the passage.

The pair eventually do return to Baker Street, only to discover that they have missed a client. Holmes, playing the role of wife, rather than companion, glances at Watson *reproachfully*; indeed, Holmes' statement is also quite telling.

Holmes glanced reproachfully at me. "So much for afternoon walks!" said he.

One gets the impression that Holmes, while irritated by the loss of a client, is quite reproachful of himself for putting Watson and his wooing before his work.

Fortunately for Holmes, the gentleman has left his pipe, and Holmes is once again able to turn his thoughts away from Watson and onto the art of deduction (how befuddle Holmes must have been, having his entire world turned upside down by one infuriating, and yet endearing, man). He begins by examining the pipe, attempting to deduce the character of its owner merely through observation. Here, Watson tells us:

My friend threw out the information in a very offhand way, but I saw that he cocked his eye at me to see if I had followed his reasoning.

Even in Holmes' analysis he cannot seem to escape the need for Watson's involvement. Truly, Holmes is being painted as quite smitten.

Sadly for us, Holmes and Watson's interaction takes a back seat to the case at hand. The case concludes itself quickly, though, and the final passages of the story once again belong to the Great Detective and his lifelong companion.

Holmes and I followed them down the lane, and my friend plucked at my sleeve as we came out.

"I think," said he, "that we shall be of more use in London than in Norbury."

Not another word did he say of the case until late that night, when he was turning away, with his lighted candle, for his bedroom.

"Watson," said he, "if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little over-confident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case than it deserves, kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

Here we are given a wealth of subtext, all within a few short sentences. First there is Holmes, plucking at Watson's sleeve and suggesting that they return to London. They have just witnessed a touching, loving scene (the reunion and acceptance of a family) and Holmes instinctively knows when to step aside. He has been proven wrong, and yet, despite this, he seems quite content, happy at having witnessed the touching reunion of the Munro family. Note too that there is no pressing case; nothing but the idle boredom of everyday living awaiting them in London, and yet Holmes instinct is to return there, his desire for home enough that he refers to its usefulness.

Then there is Holmes' request, that Watson some day whisper *Norbury* in his ear. A more intimate request one cannot imagine. This is a humbled Holmes, and it is Watson who bore witness to his humbling. One can easily imagine Watson's soft, sympathetic smile, tinged with amusement. One can easily imagine, too, Holmes smirk when

Watson rose from his chair and followed Holmes into his bedroom.

The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter* in September of 1888. While Watson does not give a date, he does mention that the story took place on a summer evening sometime during his long and intimate acquaintance with Sherlock Holmes. This suggests a later date, but it should be noted that Watson is unmarried and living in Baker Street. This is also the first time Watson has had to occasion to meet Mycroft, suggestion that the story took place sometime before Holmes' disappearance in *The Final Problem* (as we know Watson had previously met Mycroft in *FINA* --it is also impossible to date the story past its publication date). Ruling out, then, a year after Holmes' return, we can safely date *The Greek Interpreter* late in Holmes and Watson's acquaintanceship, but before Watson's marriage to Miss Morstan. The story was first published in 1893.

Synopsis:

Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock's brother, has all of Holmes' intellect, but none of Holmes' energy, so when Mr. Melas, a Greek interpreter, first shares his strange and fantastical tale with Mycroft, Mycroft's first thought is to turn the entire affair over to his brother. So begins *The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter*, and aside from allowing us some valuable insight into Holmes' singular family, the case also takes us on a mysterious journey, where a kidnapping reveals a mysterious man with sticky plaster upon his face. So concerned for this man is Mr. Melas that he is willing to risk threatened punishment by telling his tale to the Holmes' brothers; a decision that will later come back to haunt him.

The Subtext:

During my long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Sherlock Holmes I had never heard him refer to his relations, and hardly ever to his own early life. This reticence upon his part had increased the somewhat inhuman effect which he produced upon me, until sometimes I found myself regarding him as an isolated phenomenon, a brain without a heart, as deficient in human sympathy as he was pre-eminent in intelligence. His aversion to women and his disinclination to form new friendships were both typical of his unemotional charac-

ter, but not more so than his complete suppression of every reference to his own people. I had come to believe that he was an orphan with no relatives living, but one day, to my very great surprise, he began to talk to me about his brother.

So begins *The Greek Interpreter*, and already we are presented with several interesting comments. Note the contradiction in language here: Watson first tells us of his long and intimate acquaintance with Holmes, but then goes on to compare him to a brain without a heart. Clearly, at this point in their relationship, Holmes was still quite closed off, possibly fearing the immense emotional ramifications that would accompany letting Watson fully into his heart.

Watson also notes Holmes' aversion to women --a reoccurring theme in Canon. It is interesting to note here that, during the Victorian era, many men who would today be classified as homosexual were then known as invert. Victorians, known for their decorum, would not have labelled an individual an invert, but rather, they would have alluding to this 'condition' by drawing attention to the individual's eccentric behaviour. Oscar Wilde, for example, was famous for his aversion to women.

Then there is Watson's statement that Holmes was disinclined to form new friendships. We know Holmes considers Watson a friend, as he has, on several occasions, referred to Watson as such, and yet it is interesting to note that Holmes seems uninterested in forming new friendships. Obviously his friendship with Watson can be considered an anomaly, and if that is the case, one cannot help but wonder what it was that caused Holmes to single Watson out from so many others.

Finally, we have Holmes speaking to Watson of his brother, an incredibly intimate act, especially for one prone to suppressing the details of his life. That Holmes would trust Watson enough to share this information is a clear indication of Holmes' affection for Watson.

Indeed, beyond merely sharing his brother's existence with Watson, Holmes offers to introduce the pair. It need not be said that the meeting of family is quite the significant step in any relationship.

"The Diogenes Club is the queerest club in London, and Mycroft one of the queerest men. He's always there from quarter to five to twenty to eight. It's six now, so if you care for a stroll this beautiful evening I shall be very happy to introduce you to two curiosities."

I want to touch on two points in Holmes' statement. The first is Holmes' use of the word queer. Although queer traditionally meant strange, or unusual, it is today commonly associated with homosexuality. The shift in meaning, however, dates back

further than one would imagine. Indeed, in 1894, John Sholto Douglas, the ninth Marquess of Queensberry, used this word to refer to his son Lord Alfred Douglas, when complaining of Alfred's relationship with Oscar Wilde. Even before this time the word queer was commonly associated with gay men. While an exact date is unknown, its modern use can be traced back as early as the 18th century, the phrase 'queer' used to describe men who worked in molly houses (male brothels).

While queer, at this point in time, would have likely carried both meanings, it is curious to note that Holmes chooses queer in this instance, when so often Holmes has opted for singular instead. Could it be that Mycroft himself was gay? And that the Diogenes Club was, in reality, a gentleman's club?

This, of course, brings us to our second point. Prior to offering to introduce Watson to his queer brother, Holmes remarks upon hereditary traits, and informs Watson that his brother shares his aptitude for deduction and observation. Clearly this is not the only hereditary trait to pass from brother to brother. This theory becomes entirely more probable when one examines Holmes' next suggestion; that they take *a stroll this beautiful evening*. For a man entirely preoccupied by intelligence, this request is teeming with romantic innuendo.

Watson instantly agrees to accompany Holmes to the Diogenes Club, and immediately the pair set off. Holmes is very careful to explain the rules of the club, and it is interesting to note that speaking is not allowed, save for in the Stranger's Room. Stranger, as the reader may know, is another turn of the century term used to identify homosexuals.

My brother was one of the founders, and I have myself found it a very soothing atmosphere.

This was, of course, before Holmes met Watson.

To turn our attention back to serious matters, I want to point out something quite remarkable in this story.

Mycroft Holmes was a much larger and stouter man than Sherlock.

Watson, for perhaps the first time in all of Canon, refers to Holmes by his given name. While Watson has referred to Holmes as 'Mr. Sherlock Holmes', 'Sherlock Holmes', and, of course, 'Holmes', this is the first time he has used, simply, Sherlock. While this can easily be explained as a means of differentiating between the two brothers, one cannot help but notice Watson's distinct lack of propriety here. Truly, the shift in their relationship has created a new sense of familiarity. Indeed, a moment later

Watson makes use of Holmes' first name a second time.

His eyes, which were of a peculiarly light, watery gray, seemed to always retain that far-away, introspective look which I had only observed in Sherlock's when he was exerting his full powers.

It is curious to note, too, that Mycroft does not require an introduction. He is instantly aware of who Watson is, and the role Watson plays in Holmes' life.

"I am glad to meet you, sir," said he, putting out a broad, fat hand like the flipper of a seal. "I hear of Sherlock everywhere since you became his chronicler.

Recall that, when using Baring-Gould's date of 1888, Watson has only published one story: A Study in Scarlet. Surely this is not enough to presume Watson has assumed the role of chronicler.

Shortly following Watson's introduction to Mycroft, Holmes and Mycroft begin trading deductions, much to Watson's amazement. Watson expresses his incredulity, to which both Holmes and Mycroft begin to explain their reasoning. After, Watson tells us:

I began to understand what my friend meant when he said that his brother possessed even keener faculties than he did himself. He glanced across at me and smiled.

There is something quite touching in Holmes' smile, and yet, one cannot help but notice Holmes' uncertainty here. It is obvious that Holmes depends upon his uniqueness as a means of keeping Watson's interest, and yet here Holmes has demonstrated that his ability is neither unique, nor particularly well defined. Surely this must have concerned Holmes. In introducing Watson to his brother, Holmes has taken a rather large leap of faith.

This requires an extraordinary amount of trust, and we see here Holmes' uncertainty in giving over that trust. His smile, then, represents an attempt to reassure his position in Watson's life; a clear indication of just how important Watson has become to Holmes.

Holmes' attempts to gain reassurances are waylaid by Mycroft's offer of a case, one which Holmes is only too eager to accept. It is here that Mycroft asks Mr. Melas to step across and share his tale. After hearing it, Holmes and Watson return to Baker Street, discussing the case while they walk. It is interesting to note here that it is Watson who first suggests the solution to the case (with Holmes' prodding), to which Holmes replies:

"Excellent, Watson!" cried Holmes. "I really fancy that you are not far from the truth.

Holmes' enthusiasm comes with the realization that Watson is still very much interesting in Holmes' work, a great relief on Holmes' part, no doubt.

Their conversation dwindles as Holmes and Watson arrive at Baker Street, only to find Mycroft waiting for them. The case quickly turns serious and, delayed by the want of a warrant, their arrival at the scene of the crime arrives too late for the man Mr. Melas was trying to help; indeed, it comes almost too late for Mr. Melas.

The story ends without resolution, but sees Holmes and Watson back in Baker Street once more, this time hearing of the death of two Englishmen, who were traveling with a woman. Holmes, certain that the trio is the one he seeks, cannot help but theorize upon the revenge which has been served.

So ends *The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter*, Holmes relieved by Watson's continued interest, and Watson content to remain by Holmes' side. Indeed, Watson has gained an even greater advantage; proof positive that Holmes is far more than a mere brain within a body.

Watson has been accepted into Holmes' life fully now, with the added benefit of having Holmes' older brother's approval. Truly, this marks a great shift in their relationship, the two men a good deal closer, despite Holmes' perceived failure of the case.

The Sign of [the] Four

Notes:

While originally published in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine as The Sign of the Four, within the same year the story was republished under the shorter title, The Sign of Four. Since then both version have appeared in print, seemingly at random. The story itself references The Sign of the Four, rather than the shorter, four-word title.

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates The Sign of the Four in September of 1888. While other scholars have suggested a date of July 1888 (and, indeed, Watson uses both dates), most scholars agree that the story took place in 1888. The Sign of the Four was first published in February 1890.

Synopsis:

The second of Doyle's novels, The Sign of the Four is noteworthy for introducing two key pieces of Canon; Holmes' cocaine addiction, and Watson's future wife, Mary Morstan. Miss Morstan, having received an anonymous letter, which references an apparent wrong she has suffered, seeks Holmes' aid in discovering the persons responsible for the letter. She suspects it is related to six valuable pearls which have been sent to her at regular intervals. She also suspects that the affair has something to do with the 1878 disappearance of her father. She asks Holmes and Watson to accompany her to the meeting requested in her anonymous letter. Upon arriving, Holmes discovers that the case runs deeper than he originally suspected.

Solving the case proves no small feat, and Holmes and Watson are forced to endure a long and frustrating search through the whole of London; a task which begins with the use of a clever canine and ends with a dramatic chase upon the Thames River. An exotic tale of betrayal, greed, and revenge soon follows. The Sign of the Four is perhaps the most dramatic of all Doyle's stories.

The Subtext:

Before we begin, I wanted to take a moment to make a few notes on cocaine⁷, as knowing its history⁸ will allow us to put Holmes' use into perspective. The cocaine alkaloid, derived from the Coca plant (a plant first used by the indigenous population of South America for its stimulating properties) was first isolated in 1855, creating the white powder that we now know as cocaine. Cocaine was first coveted for its medical properties (and indeed attempts to isolate the alkaloid were largely made for this purpose), but it wasn't until 1879 when the medical community began experimenting with its use on a larger scale. In fact, one of cocaine's first uses was in the treatment of morphine addiction.

By 1885, cocaine was being sold in London in the form of cigarettes, powders, and a solution which could be injected through the vein. Cocaine could be purchased from local chemists and apothecaries, and was quite legal, its use socially acceptable.

It was not until the turn of the century that a wide-spread call for cocaine's prohibition was made. By that point, the medical community was well aware of cocaine's addictive attributes. Cocaine was still available for legal use in England up until 1920.

The side effects of cocaine use on the body are numerous, but for the purpose of this essay we are going to examine the effect of cocaine use on sex. Immediately following a dose of cocaine, sexual interest and pleasure is amplified. As the cocaine wears off, however, one of the typical side effects is impotence⁹. These side effects increase and become more pronounced with long-term use.

Chronic use of cocaine (thrice daily for as many months) often resulted in users experiencing a decline in sex drive, as well as their having difficulty achieving and maintaining an erection. In all likelihood, Holmes' cocaine use resulted in his impotence. In fact, his disinterest in sex is likely tied directly to his use of cocaine.

Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantelpiece, and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case. With his long, white, nervous fingers he adjusted the delicate needle and rolled back his left shirtcuff. For some little time his eyes rested thoughtfully upon the sinewy forearm and wrist, all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture-marks. Finally, he thrust the sharp point home, pressed down the tiny piston, and sank back into the velvet-lined armchair with a long sigh of satisfaction.

7 <http://www.cocaine.org/>

8 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cocaine>

9 http://www.ccsa.ca/CCSA/EN/Topics/Substances_Addictions/CocaineOverview.htm

We know now that cocaine was not readily available to the general public until the mid 1880s. This implies that Holmes has likely been using cocaine for at most five years. Since Watson later references morphine, it is entirely possible that Holmes first starting using cocaine as a means of overcoming his morphine addiction. One must question, however, aside from boredom, what other reasons Holmes could have for using cocaine. One possibly explanation is that Holmes' cocaine use stemmed from a need to control his libido. Indeed, it is entirely possible (especially given that Watson marries in this story) that any physical relationship which might have existed up until this point had ended and Holmes, not trusting himself in Watson's presence, turned to cocaine as a means of controlling his otherwise uncontrollable lust.

A mere theory, and yet, when one eliminates the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

Three times a day for as many months I had witnessed this performance, but custom had not reconciled my mind to it. On the contrary, from day to day I had become more irritable at the sight, and my conscience swelled nightly within me at the thought that I had lacked the courage to protest. Again and again I had registered a vow that I should deliver my soul upon the subject; but there was that in the cool, nonchalant air of my companion which made him the last man with whom one would care to take anything approaching to a liberty. His great powers, his masterly manner, and the experience which I had had of his many extraordinary qualities, all made me diffident and backward in crossing him.

Yet upon that afternoon, whether it was the Beaune which I had taken with my lunch or the additional exasperation produced by the extreme deliberation of his manner, I suddenly felt that I could hold out no longer.

Despite the prevalence of cocaine in mainstream society, Watson seems quite concerned by Holmes' need for the drug. Indeed, one would assume, especially given Watson's position as a doctor, that he would advocate its use. And yet, he does not, which suggests perhaps that Watson is only too aware of the change cocaine affected in Holmes. Watson, who knows Holmes better than any living soul, is in the perfect position to judge any change in Holmes' behaviour (further proof that Holmes' cocaine use is recent) and is obviously not impressed by what he sees.

Indeed, Watson speaks of his swelling conscious and the desire to bare his soul. Note too Watson's description of Holmes, Watson referring to him as cool and nonchalant; additional evidence that some transgression has passed between them. Despite this transgression, it is obvious that Watson still cares a great deal for Holmes; that Holmes

still holds a place of honour in Watson's heart, and that Watson still concerns himself with Holmes' well-being.

Eventually Watson must cave, for Holmes is too dear to him to allow the matter to stand. It is curious here that Watson requires the use of alcohol to bolster his courage. What transpired between the two men to bring them to this place we do not know, and yet it is obvious that some spat has occurred: is it too far to assume, then, that this quarrel is that of lovers?

Watson does indeed state his case, and Holmes' reaction is entirely logical; cold and precise and Watson soon gives up what he knows now is a hopeless cause. Their talk soon turns to Holmes' work, and Watson is more than eager to share in the recollection of the case he documented in *A Study in Scarlet*.

"But you have yourself had some experience of my methods of work in the Jefferson Hope case."

"Yes, indeed," said I cordially. "I was never so struck by anything in my life. I even embodied it in a small brochure, with the somewhat fantastic title of A Study in Scarlet."

He shook his head sadly.

"I glanced over it," said he. "Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon it. Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid."

"But the romance was there," I remonstrated. "I could not tamper with the facts."

We cannot agree with Watson more; the romance was there, and it is interesting to note that Watson was well aware of its inclusion, and, indeed, that Holmes was able to interpret the subtextual elements contained within the story. That he should disapprove of them is quite understandable; given the period in which *A Study in Scarlet* was written, the merest hint of a romantic relationship between Holmes and Watson would have caused quite the scandal.

Watson is, of course, quite disappointed by Holmes' criticism, and tells us:

I was annoyed at this criticism of a work which had been specially designed to please him.

It is curious to note that, while *A Study in Scarlet* took place in 1881, Watson first published it in 1887. Here we are, one year later, and Watson has only just had the occasion to ask Holmes his opinion of the work. That Holmes would find it overly romantic is not entirely surprising, and yet Watson's confession that he had written *A*

Study in Scarlet to please Holmes is quite suggestive, as it lends further weight to the theory that Watson spent the better portion of his years in Baker Street attempting to woo Holmes.

We first noted the potential for a shift in Holmes and Watson's relationship in *The Valley of Fear*, which, according to Baring-Gould, took place in January of 1888. This occurred just after the publication of *A Study in Scarlet*, which would suggest that Watson's attempts to woo Holmes were successful. It is entirely likely that Holmes read *A Study in Scarlet* shortly after its release. As he is quite critical of it, we must again question whether some quarrel has arisen between them.

Indeed, in the following paragraphs, Holmes turns to boasting over his own works, something that Watson bears quite easily. Still, one gets the impression that Watson is still quite annoyed by Holmes' dismissal of Watson's writing. One cannot help but wonder if this was the catalyst for Watson's marriage. Dismissing love at first sight, how else can we explain the rapid advancement of Watson's relationship with Mary, except with the suggestion that Watson was seeking to replace Holmes' affections?

Despite Watson's annoyance, and indeed, the deep-seeded hurt which would later drive him into a client's arms, Watson is entirely too consumed by Holmes to allow his upset to linger for long.

"But I weary you with my hobby."

"Not at all," I answered earnestly. "It is of the greatest interest to me, especially since I have had the opportunity of observing your practical application of it."

Clearly, regardless of what has passed between them, Watson is still very much enthralled by Holmes. We see here, too, Holmes need for Watson, as there is a touch of humility in the comment, *'I weary you with my hobby'*. That Holmes should refer to his work as a mere hobby suggests that Holmes is only too aware of Watson's irritation. We see Holmes seeking reassurance here, which Watson is only too eager to give. This marks one of the many attempts at reconciliation found throughout *The Sign of the Four*.

Holmes, reassured by Watson's confirmation of interest, proceeds to demonstrate the abilities that first drew Watson to his side. We get the impression that Holmes is reminding Watson of the singular talents which first attracted Watson's interest.

Indeed, as the demonstration continues, Watson feels the sudden need to test Holmes' abilities. We have seen this before (ironically, in *A Study in Scarlet*), except here Watson's testing is a means of opening the lines of communication.

"The thing, however, is, as you say, of the simplest. Would you think me impertinent if I were to put your theories to a more severe test?"

"On the contrary," he answered, "it would prevent me from taking a second dose of cocaine. I should be delighted to look into any problem which you might submit to me."

Watson's game has the added benefit of drawing Holmes' attention away from the drug which has consumed him. It is important to make note of this, for Watson will use this tactic time and time again in his efforts to wean Holmes from what Watson sees as an addiction.

Watson's motives, however, are not entirely pure. Indeed, Watson tells us:

I handed him over the watch with some slight feeling of amusement in my heart, for the test was, as I thought, an impossible one, and I intended it as a lesson against the somewhat dogmatic tone which he occasionally assumed.

There is an obvious sense of bitterness in Watson's words here, and one cannot help but notice that Watson seems to be battling two warring emotions; on the one hand, he is still quite taken with Holmes, and yet, on the other hand, he is still quite hurt by Holmes' dismissal.

"Though unsatisfactory, my research has not been entirely barren," he observed, staring up at the ceiling with dreamy, lack-lustre eyes.

Despite Watson's ploy, Holmes is able to deduce several points of interest from the watch Watson has handed him. Note here that, despite the purpose of the experiment, Watson is unable to distance himself from Holmes completely. He refers to Holmes' dreamy, lack-lustre eyes, an observation that demonstrates Watson's continuing attraction to Holmes. It should be remarked that this is not the first occasion which reveals Watson's seeming obsession with Holmes' eyes¹⁰.

Much to Watson's surprise, and indeed, shock, Holmes is able to deduce far more than Watson intended. Watson's reaction, and Holmes' response, is quite telling:

I sprang from my chair and limped impatiently about the room with considerable bitterness in my heart.

"This is unworthy of you, Holmes," I said. "I could not have believed that you would have descended to this. You have made inquiries into the history of my unhappy brother, and you now pretend to deduce this knowledge in some fanciful way. You cannot expect me to believe that you have read all this from his old watch! It is unkind and, to speak plainly,

10 The Noble Bachelor; Scandal in Bohemia; The Man with the Twisted Lip; The Valley of Fear.

has a touch of charlatanism in it."

"My dear doctor," said he kindly, "pray accept my apologies. Viewing the matter as an abstract problem, I had forgotten how personal and painful a thing it might be to you. I assure you, however, that I never even knew that you had a brother until you handed me the watch."

While Watson's upset does in part stem from the accuracy of Holmes' analysis (which very likely evoked painful memories), we suspect that part of Watson's outrage stems from his failed retaliation. What is interesting here, however, is Holmes' response. Holmes refers to Watson as *my dear doctor*, a curious choice of appellation, for we see here both Holmes' affection (my dear) and Holmes' formality (doctor). Holmes is simultaneously demonstrating his fondness for Watson, while distancing himself from Watson with the use of Watson's professional title. Clearly, Holmes is quite taken aback by Watson's outrage; this point is made further evident by Holmes' sincere apology.

This entire exchange only serves to increase Watson's discomfort, further evidence to suggest that Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan was not the result of love, but rather, some subconscious desire on Watson's part to distance himself from Holmes. Despite this, Watson is still quite attached to Holmes. This can be seen a paragraph later, when Watson, feeling quite chagrin for accusing Holmes of charlatanism, offers a most heart-felt apology:

"I regret the injustice which I did you. I should have had more faith in your marvellous faculty."

Unfortunately, their exchange is interrupted by the arrival of a client. Holmes, clearly still sensing Watson's anger, requests Watson's involvement in the case; an attempt to make further amends, we do not doubt.

"Don't go, Doctor. I should prefer that you remain."

We see here, too, that Holmes still needs Watson; still desires Watson's companionship and aid. Sadly, one cannot help but theorize that, shortly after uttering those words, Holmes came to regret them.

Almost immediately upon meeting Mary, Watson expresses his attraction. Indeed, he seems quite drawn to her, despite telling us that *her face had neither regularity of feature nor beauty of complexion*. This is actually a rather curious description, especially when one considers Holmes' appearance. In fact, one can argue that Mary's unconventional appearance likely reminded Watson of the same physical traits he had come to admire in Holmes.

Watson statement becomes even more remarkable when we consider the atmosphere in Baker Street before Mary's arrival. First impressions are often made entirely on appearance, and, as Watson did not know Mary at this point, he would not have been in a position to comment on her personality. He clearly states that she is unattractive, and yet, seems inexplicably drawn to her.

In fact, Watson's instant attraction to Mary lends further weight to the theory that Watson's interest in Mary stemmed primarily from the displacement of Watson's feelings for Holmes. Watson is angry with Holmes. Watson has recently been hurt by Holmes. Watson is beginning to perceive Holmes' selfish nature. One can easily imagine, then, that Watson has likely come to the conclusion that Holmes is incapable of returning Watson's feelings. That Watson would immediately transfer these feelings onto someone else is quite natural; no doubt Watson's subconscious was well aware that by transferring his romantic interest for Holmes onto Mary, he would be better able to distance himself from Holmes, and perhaps save himself from future heartache.

Despite Watson's attraction to Mary, his attraction for Holmes is still quite apparent.

Holmes rubbed his hands, and his eyes glistened. He leaned forward in his chair with an expression of extraordinary concentration upon his clear-cut, hawk-like features.

That Watson should refer to Holmes' features as *clear-cut* and *hawk-like* is very indicative of Watson's appreciation of Holmes' beauty. This is particularly remarkable when one considers that Holmes was not, by any means, an attractive man. Clearly, then, this attraction is based entirely on Watson's intimacy with Holmes: beauty is, after all, in the eye of the beholder. The same cannot be said for Mary, as Watson has only just met her.

Holmes' attention, however, is not on Watson, but rather, the client and the case at hand. Indeed, Watson seems uncomfortable with this, and tells us:

I felt that my position was an embarrassing one.

"You will, I am sure, excuse me," I said, rising from my chair.

Again, we have additional evidence to suggest that Watson's marriage stems, not from any connection with Miss Morstan, but rather, from a discomfort with Holmes. Watson is keenly aware that Holmes' attention is easily given to his clients, something which likely vexed Watson, as he has had to fight, time and time again, to earn Holmes' interest. This disconnect likely resonated within Watson's heart, only serving to widen the growing chasm between the two men.

Miss Morstan, however, requests that Watson stay, a request Watson is incapable of denying. He remains, and Mary relays her strange tale. Upon her leaving, Watson remarks that Mary is an attractive woman. This is in direct contradiction to his earlier statement, and yet, when viewed within the context of his conversation with Holmes, one can immediately discern Watson's true intentions.

Standing at the window, I watched her walking briskly down the street until the gray turban and white feather were but a speck in the sombre crowd.

"What a very attractive woman!" I exclaimed, turning to my companion.

He had lit his pipe again and was leaning back with drooping eyelids. "Is she?" he said languidly; "I did not observe."

"You really are an automaton -- a calculating machine," I cried. "There is something positively inhuman in you at times."

He smiled gently.

Throughout Mary's visit, one gets the impression that Mary's interest lies, not in Watson, but rather, in Holmes. Indeed, she seems quite taken with Holmes. Watson, it would appear, sensed this, and his suggestion of her attractiveness can be viewed as an indication of his jealousy. Indeed, that Watson should test Holmes' reaction with his statement is quite suggestive that this jealousy existed for Holmes rather than Mary.

Holmes' response, then, should alleviate Watson's fears. It has the opposite effect, however, causing Watson to once again make note of Holmes' calculating nature; a nature which undoubtedly increased Watson's fears that Holmes should never return Watson's affection. Again, we have evidence to suggest that Watson's increasing interest in Mary stemmed from Watson's fear of Holmes' rejection.

Holmes seems quite aware of this, and we get the impression that he recognized Watson's growing doubt. His smile, then, takes on new meaning. Note Watson's use of the word *gently*, a curious description, which suggests that Holmes is only too aware of Watson's thoughts; and, indeed, his subconscious interest in Mary. Although Holmes seems incapable of vocally reassuring Watson, he does attempt reassurance. It is a shame that Watson's powers of observation do not equal Holmes', for if they did, one cannot doubt that the matter would have resolved itself in an entirely more satisfactory manner.

Again, Holmes seems quite well aware of this, and Watson's obliviousness only serves to increase Holmes' distance, Holmes continuing to shy away from Watson and the emotional connection which once existed between them. It is not unreasonable to sug-

gest that Holmes' reaction is directly related to his fear of losing Watson. Indeed, as the loss of Watson must appear to be quite imminent, one cannot doubt that Holmes, knowing this, would have retracted further into his cold, calculating mind.

Despite Holmes' desire to withdraw away from Watson, he cannot help but express his disdain for womankind, perhaps hoping to frighten Watson away from the path Watson has so clearly chosen.

"It is of the first importance," he cried, "not to allow your judgment to be biased by personal qualities. A client is to me a mere unit, a factor in a problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning. I assure you that the most winning woman I ever knew was hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance-money, and the most repellent man of my acquaintance is a philanthropist who has spent nearly a quarter of a million upon the London poor."

Sadly this tactic would fail, and Holmes must have sensed this, for a moment later he turns the topic back to the case at hand.

The distance between them continues to grow, until at last Holmes leaves Watson to his thoughts, heading out to begin his own investigation. Having previously arranged to escort Miss Morstan to her requested evening meeting, Holmes arrives back in Baker Street shortly before six, just in time to greet Miss Morstan. The trio set off, and Watson tells us:

I am not subject to impressions, but the dull, heavy evening, with the strange business upon which we were engaged, combined to make me nervous and depressed.

We sense here that Watson is perhaps becoming aware of his growing attachment to Mary. Indeed, Watson now knows that he must abandon Holmes, and yet, the thought distresses him. Note that Watson's comment comes as he sits next to Mary in the cab, Holmes silent and brooding across from them. Watson has found his surrogate, and yet, there is a distinct sense of loss, and indeed, wistfulness in Watson's mood. That Mary might replace Holmes is without doubt, and yet, Watson is well aware that he will lose something in the exchange. One cannot help but question if perhaps Watson was beginning to doubt his intentions; question whether he could truly be happy without his Holmes.

Holmes must have sensed Watson's growing depression, for, after meeting their guide and beginning a new journey through the winding streets of London, Holmes makes one last ditch effort to impress and win back Watson's interest.

Sherlock Holmes was never at fault, however, and he muttered the names as the cab

rattled through squares and in and out by tortuous by-streets.

Holmes' knowledge of London is one of his great attributes, and Holmes no doubt hoped that by demonstrating this skill, he might boast his better qualities and remind Watson of his usefulness.

Although Watson seems to both recognize and appreciate this strange gift, Holmes attempts fall flat, Watson continuing to brood in his dark thoughts until at last they reach their destination.

An interview with Mr. Sholto follows, during which, Watson seems acutely aware of Holmes and Holmes' mood. Indeed, Watson tells us:

Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his chair with an abstracted expression and the lids drawn low over his glittering eyes. As I glanced at him I could not but think how on that very day he had complained bitterly of the commonplaceness of life. Here at least was a problem which would tax his sagacity to the utmost.

While again we are witness to Watson's obsession with Holmes' eyes, here we are more concerned with the underlying bitterness in Watson's statement. Indeed, one can easily imagine that Watson now makes the assumption that Holmes considers Watson one of the commonplaces of every day life. Again and again Watson is witness to the interest Holmes placed in his cases, and again and again Watson compares this to the indifference Holmes seems to place in their relationship. It is no wonder, then, that Watson should feel the urge to seek affection elsewhere.

It is shortly after making this statement that the group precedes to Mr. Sholto's brother's place of residence, where they intend to retrieve Mary's promised treasure. During this journey, and indeed, upon arriving, Watson seems to grow increasingly close to Mary. In fact, he tells us:

A wondrous subtle thing is love, for here were we two, who had never seen each other before that day, between whom no word or even look of affection had ever passed, and yet now in an hour of trouble our hands instinctively sought for each other.

Here Watson is speaking of love, and yet he is still careful to tell us that they had not known each other before that day. While some may argue for love at first sight, reality often disputes this claim, and when we remove it from the equation, the only possible explanation which remains is that of transference.

This theory becomes even more definitive as Holmes and Watson proceed into the residence of Brother Bartholomew, leaving Mary behind to tend to the distraught housekeeper.

Holmes is now in his element, and, with the worry of Watson's growing affection for Mary temporarily left behind, Holmes is able to concentrate on the case at hand, making a particular effort to include Watson in his investigation. Watson, fully engaged now in one of Holmes' cases, spares not a single thought for the woman he claims to have fallen in love with.

"It means murder," said he, stooping over the dead man. "Ah! I expected it. Look here!"

He pointed to what looked like a long dark thorn stuck in the skin just above the ear.

"It looks like a thorn," said I.

"It is a thorn. You may pick it out. But be careful, for it is poisoned."

It is quite easy to sense Holmes' deliberate intention to include Watson in the methods that first drew Watson to Holmes' side. We see here, too, Holmes concern for Watson's safety; evidence of Holmes' attachment to Watson. While Holmes may not be able to put his feelings into words, his every action demonstrates their existence.

Their interaction is interrupted by Mr. Sholto's astonished cry that the treasure has been stolen. Holmes, unwilling to allow an interruption, quickly sends Mr. Sholto to seek out the police. Upon his leaving, Holmes remarks:

"Now, Watson," said Holmes, rubbing his hands, "we have half an hour to ourselves. Let us make good use of it."

There is obvious relief in Holmes' tone; that he should have Watson alone for the first time that evening must have been of great comfort to him. Indeed, when one notes Watson's response:

"Simple!" I ejaculated.

One cannot help but note that, apparently, the pair did indeed make good use of their time.

In actuality, half an hour did prove enough time to put Holmes on the right scent, despite Watson's continual confusion. Sadly, their time is interrupted by the arrival of the official force. It soon becomes quite obvious that Holmes and Watson will be forced to pursue their investigation independently, a realization that spurs Holmes into action.

A word with you, Watson."

He led me out to the head of the stair.

"This unexpected occurrence," he said, "has caused us rather to lose sight of the original purpose of our journey."

"I have just been thinking so," I answered; "it is not right that Miss Morstan should

remain in this stricken house."

"No. You must escort her home. She lives with Mrs. Cecil Forrester in Lower Camberwell, so it is not very far. I will wait for you here if you will drive out again. Or perhaps you are too tired?"

"By no means. I don't think I could rest until I know more of this fantastic business. I have seen something of the rough side of life, but I give you my word that this quick succession of strange surprises to-night has shaken my nerve completely. I should like, however, to see the matter through with you, now that I have got so far."

"Your presence will be of great service to me," he answered.

Holmes, knowing now that their investigation will likely take them through the night, realizes that Miss Morstan must return home. While Holmes was likely loath to send Watson on the errand of returning Mary, he is presented with little choice in the matter. He wants to be free of her, and while allowing Watson to spend more time in her presence will likely speed Watson's attachment to her, Holmes can think of no other recourse.

And so Holmes requests that Watson accompany Mary home. Note that Holmes is very particular to tack on an additional request; one which demands Watson's speed. Holmes could have very easily sent someone else for the dog, and yet, he requests that Watson retrieve him, knowing that Watson, having been given such an important mission, will not have the time to linger long with Mary.

Note too Holmes' uncertainty. He distinctly asks Watson if he is willing to continue in the investigation. Watson's response, while not surprising, very likely provided the reassurance Holmes was looking for. Indeed, Holmes is so grateful that he bestows a compliment upon Watson, telling him that his presence will *be of great service to me*.

Before Watson can leave, however, Holmes goes on to quote Goethe, stating that he is always pithy. What is interesting here is that Holmes frequently quotes Goethe (indeed, Holmes quotes a passage written by Johann Wolfgang Goethe on two separate occasions in *The Sign of the Four* alone). Goethe, as the reader may be aware, was well known for his exploration of sexuality within his art. Indeed, many of his works are rich with homoeroticism, a trait which has led to speculation regarding the possibility of Goethe's own homosexuality¹¹.

It is with this statement that Watson takes his leave, and while the two are separated, we are going to turn our attention to Watson's evolving interest in Mary.

11 <http://www.questia.com/library/book/outing-goethe-and-his-age-by-alice-a-kuzniar.jsp>

Bear in mind, Watson has known Mary for less than a day at this point. That afternoon she appeared in the sitting room at Baker Street in order to seek Holmes' aid. She returned later in the evening, and together with Holmes and Watson made her way to the Lyceum Theatre, where they then proceeded to Thaddeus Sholto's home. After a brief explanation from Mr. Sholto, the group proceeded to Sholto's brother's home, where Watson abandoned Mary in order to aid Holmes in his investigation.

Despite this brief introduction, Watson wishes the reader to believe that he has fallen hopelessly in love with Mary Morstan. It is not a stretch to suggest that this is neither logical, nor realistic. Our question, then, becomes one of probability. If Watson could not have known Mary long enough to develop feelings of love, then why does Watson wish us to believe that said love existed?

We have touched on one theory; that being Mary's role as a surrogate. It is entirely possible that Mary acted as a stand-in for Holmes, that, in fact, Watson was transferring his emotional connection and affection for Holmes onto Mary simply because she presented herself at a moment when Watson was seeking escape from the inevitable hurt Watson's subconscious foresaw.

Alternatively, we can examine this love story as though it were a ruse. Perhaps relations between Holmes and Watson were still quite admirable. If this is the case, then the tension between them can be seen as an diversion, in which case, Mary's role in the story could have served the same purpose. Could it have been that Holmes and Watson were indeed ensconced in romantic bliss, and, perhaps at Holmes' urging, Watson devised this false romance as a means of misleading the public? This theory has a good deal of potential, especially when one examines the often conflicting information provided by Watson in regards to his marriage. Indeed, further proof for this theory can be seen in Holmes' dismissal of *A Study in Scarlet*, as his primary objection stemmed from the mention of the romantic nature of their relationship.

While these are only theories, they do warrant consideration, and provide for an interesting examination of Canon from a subtextual position. Clearly we can dismiss Watson's insistence that Mary represented 'love at first sight', for even non-cynics agree that such a thing is rare, if it exists at all. Lust is entirely possible, and yet time and time again Watson has told us that it was Mary's sweet manner which first drew him to her, and not her outward appearance. Since love at first sight borders on impossible, that only leaves the improbable. The above stated theories clearly fit within this category.

Watson does eventually return, and it is interesting to note that he did not linger

long with Mary. Upon his return, Watson finds Holmes *standing on the doorstep with his hands in his pockets, smoking his pipe*. One can easily suggest that Holmes was waiting for Watson, for why else might he be standing on the doorstep?

Indeed, Holmes shows great excitement at Watson's return, and immediately requests Watson's aid inside. Once inside, Holmes remarks his intention to track the individuals involved. He exits through the roof, attempting to follow the path of retreat used by one of the men. Watson, obeying Holmes' command, retrieves the dog he has brought and awaits Holmes' arrival outside of the house. Holmes appears shortly, with a small case in hand; the pouch containing several darts similar to those used in Bartholomew Sholto's murder.

"They are hellish things," said he. "Look out that you don't prick yourself. I'm delighted to have them, for the chances are that they are all he has. There is the less fear of you or me finding one in our skin before long. I would sooner face a Martini bullet, myself. Are you game for a six-mile trudge, Watson?"

"Certainly," I answered.

"Your leg will stand it?"

This is of particular interest, because the discovery of the darts presents Holmes with an opportunity to once again demonstrate his concern for Watson's well-being. Indeed, Holmes takes this concern one step further in inquiring after Watson's leg. The reader will recall that Watson, early on in the story, remarked that he *had had a Jezaii bullet through it some time before, and though it did not prevent me from walking it ached wearily at every change of the weather*.

Recall that in *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson's war wound occurred in his shoulder. While scholars have debated the cause of this second wound, it is your author's opinion that this second wound occurred sometime after Watson's return from Afghanistan. Indeed, it is entirely probable that the wound is quite recent, and that Watson obtained it in Holmes' presence. Further evidence is given to substantiate this view a few paragraphs later when Holmes tells us that the case has resulted in a *six-mile limp for a half-pay officer with a damaged tendo Achilles*. Prior to *The Sign of the Four*, Watson was not known to possess a limp. That Holmes is able to identify the cause of this limp indicates that Holmes was present when the wound occurred.

If we assume, then, that Watson was hurt assisting and aiding Holmes in a case, then Holmes' concern takes on new meaning. That Holmes would ask after Watson's leg is quite indicative of the guilt Holmes must have felt at having caused Watson injury. It

is also quite indicative of the fear and worry Holmes must have experienced at having witnessed the infliction of this injury, and one cannot help but wonder if this is the event which first caused Holmes to withdraw away from Watson. Another theory, and yet one which fits well within Canon.

Watson's reassurances are enough to alleviate Holmes' fears, and the pair soon set off on the trail of the men responsible for Sholto's death. As they wind in and out of London's many streets and by-ways, Holmes remarks that, while using Toby (their dog) to track the men is handy, it is not by any means the only option available to him. Holmes obviously wishes Watson to know that he is capable of a great many resources. Watson, of course, does not doubt Holmes' methods, and states:

"There is credit, and to spare," said I. "I assure you, Holmes, that I marvel at the means by which you obtain your results in this case even more than I did in the Jefferson Hope murder. The thing seems to me to be deeper and more inexplicable. How, for example, could you describe with such confidence the wooden-legged man?"

Note that Watson, in the absence of Mary, now turns his complete attention and devotion back to Holmes. Indeed, so caught up in the case is Watson that once again Holmes has become the only living soul in the whole of London. Holmes' response of *pshaw, my dear boy*, is quite indicative of Holmes' excitement, and indeed, glee, at having Watson once again at his service. It is obvious here that Holmes is entirely too pleased by Watson's compliment.

So pleased, in fact, that Holmes soon cries out:

How sweet the morning air is! See how that one little cloud floats like a pink feather from some gigantic flamingo. Now the red rim of the sun pushes itself over the London cloud-bank.

A curiously romantic description of the rise of dawn, one must agree. Holmes happiness is quite apparent in this statement, and one can only conclude that this happiness stems from the relaxation of the tension which has existed between Holmes and Watson up until this point. Truly Holmes must have felt, with great certainty, that his place in Watson's life, and, indeed, heart, was now wholly secure.

Indeed, this good mood continues, and seems to have rubbed off on Watson, for as Toby leads them astray, Watson tells us:

Sherlock Holmes and I looked blankly at each other and then burst simultaneously into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

This scene is ripe with playfulness; indeed, the entire incident must have served to

remind the men of the attachment between them, for from this point forward the tension which existed in the first few chapters of the story seems to disappear entirely.

Upon discovering that the men they were seeking had taken a boat, and hence could not be traced by Toby, Holmes and Watson return to Baker Street, where Watson tells us:

A bath at Baker Street and a complete change freshened me up wonderfully. When I came down to our room I found the breakfast laid and Holmes pouring out the coffee.

Within the span of a few short paragraphs the men have returned to the domestic bliss which epitomized their every day existence. Moments later, Holmes tells Watson that he has had enough of the case and that he ‘*better have your ham and eggs first*’. This domesticity on Holmes’ behalf is a clear indication of Holmes’ ease with the situation. Indeed, one can also suggest that Holmes, playing the role of housewife, was attempting to solidify this newfound comfort by reminding Watson of the pleasant aspects of their cohabitation.

The case, however, soon intrudes upon this picture of familial happiness, for shortly after sitting down to his breakfast, Watson’s meal is interrupted by the arrival of the Baker Street Irregulars; a group of street urchins Holmes frequently employed in the gathering of information.

Holmes quickly disperses the unruly lot, upon which Watson questions whether Holmes intends to retire. Holmes’ response, we will see, provides several points of interest.

Are you going to bed, Holmes?”

“No: I am not tired. I have a curious constitution. I never remember feeling tired by work, though idleness exhausts me completely. I am going to smoke and to think over this queer business to which my fair client has introduced us.

Note first Watson’s lack of formality here. He does not ask if Holmes intends to retire, but rather, if Holmes is *going to bed*. One cannot help but question Watson’s motives here, as it is entirely possible that Watson, had Holmes’ response been different, would have taken the occasion as an invitation to further repair the rift between them.

Holmes, however, has now turned his attention back to the case at hand. He must have sensed Watson’s disappointment, for a moment later he remarks that he intends to think over *this queer business to which my fair client has introduced us*. Note the use of *my* and Holmes’ description of Mary as *fair*. We know that Mary was of unconven-

tional appearance, and would not have warranted such a description. We know, too, that Holmes has stated, on numerous occasions, his aversion to the fairer sex. We can presume, then, that Holmes hoped by referring to Mary in this manner that he might further dissuade Watson's interest; indeed, Holmes' statement suggests some claim on his behalf, and Holmes was well aware that Watson would shy away from any woman who captured Holmes' interest.

It is entirely likely that Holmes regretted mentioning Mary, for a moment later he attempts to distract Watson by remarking on Watson's exhaustion. Indeed, Holmes' statement that Watson looks *regularly done*, and his request that Watson '*lie down there on the sofa and see if I can put you to sleep*' is highly suggestive. We sense in Holmes' comment a desperate attempt to woo Watson back, and to prevent Watson from leaving; Holmes using every conceivable method to achieve this goal.

Watson's reaction, then, is quite remarkable, for Watson tells us:

He took up his violin from the corner, and as I stretched myself out he began to play some low, dreamy, melodious air -- his own, no doubt, for he had a remarkable gift for improvisation. I have a vague remembrance of his gaunt limbs, his earnest face and the rise and fall of his bow. Then I seemed to be floated peacefully away upon a soft sea of sound until I found myself in dreamland, with the sweet face of Mary Morstan looking down upon me.

Note Watson's praise of Holmes' musical abilities. Note, too, Watson's description of Holmes, his reference to Holmes' *gaunt limbs* and *earnest face*. That Watson would drift off peacefully at Holmes' playing is very telling, but perhaps even more telling is the image of Mary that appears in Watson's dream. Clearly Mary is tied implicitly with Holmes; so much so that it is not unreasonable to suggest that Mary has, in essence, become Holmes. That Watson would think of Mary while being serenaded by Holmes is quite suggestive of Mary's surrogate nature.

Perhaps even more curious than Holmes' serenading of Watson is Watson's statement upon waking. Watson tells us:

It was late in the afternoon before I woke, strengthened and refreshed. Sherlock Holmes still sat exactly as I had left him save that he had laid aside his violin and was deep in a book. He looked across at me as I stirred, and I noticed that his face was dark and troubled.
"You have slept soundly," he said.

Note that Watson first retired sometime that morning. As Holmes has apparently not moved in that time, it appears as though Holmes has passed the day in silent vigil over Watson's sleeping form. That Holmes would pass his time watching Watson sleep

is quite remarkable.

Holmes then reports the difficulties he has come across in regards to the case. Watson, feeling better for having slept, announces:

"Can I do anything? I am perfectly fresh now, and quite ready for another night's outing."

It is clear here that Watson does still love his Holmes. That he is willing to spend another evening in Holmes' presence, traipsing through the streets of London, is highly suggestive of just how engaging Watson finds Holmes' work, and his company.

Sadly, Holmes is still waiting on a lead, and tells Watson as much, remarking that there is nothing more they can do. This presents Watson with the perfect opportunity to announce his intentions to visit Miss Morstan. Clearly, Watson's affection for Holmes and his growing interest in Mary war within him.

"Then I shall run over to Camberwell and call upon Mrs. Cecil Forrester. She asked me to, yesterday."

"On Mrs. Cecil Forrester?" asked Holmes with the twinkle of a smile in his eyes.

"Well, of course on Miss Morstan, too. They were anxious to hear what happened."

"I would not tell them too much," said Holmes. "Women are never to be entirely trusted -- not the best of them."

I did not pause to argue over this atrocious sentiment.

Holmes masks his disappointment well, and yet, he cannot help but warn Watson against Mary. He is careful to include Mary in the best of them, so as to not offend Watson's sensibility, and yet his intentions are quite clear; Holmes is distrustful of womankind, and wishes to instil this same sentiment in Watson, likely in hopes of preventing Watson's growing interest from blooming into something which might one day serve to remove Watson from Holmes' life.

This marks a turning point for Holmes, for despite the hope he had felt upon campaigning through the streets of London earlier than morning, Holmes must now realize that Watson's leaving is inevitable. Indeed, upon Watson's return, Watson tells us:

It was evening before I left Camberwell, and quite dark by the time I reached home. My companion's book and pipe lay by his chair, but he had disappeared. I looked about in the hope of seeing a note, but there was none.

"I suppose that Mr. Sherlock Holmes has gone out," I said to Mrs. Hudson as she came up to lower the blinds.

"No, sir. He has gone to his room, sir. Do you know, sir," sinking her voice into an impres-

sive whisper, "I am afraid for his health."

"Why so, Mrs. Hudson?"

"Well, he's that strange, sir. After you was gone he walked and he walked, up and down, and up and down, until I was weary of the sound of his footstep. Then I heard him talking to himself and muttering, and every time the bell rang out he came on the stairhead, with 'What is that, Mrs. Hudson?' And now he has slammed off to his room, but I can hear him walking away the same as ever. I hope he's not going to be ill, sir. I ventured to say something to him about cooling medicine, but he turned on me, sir, with such a look that I don't know how ever I got out of the room."

Clearly Holmes has cause to be upset. His Watson has just abandoned him in favour of a woman, and while some may argue that it is the case that tries Holmes' nerves, it is curious to note that this reaction came about only after Watson's leaving.

Indeed, the next morning, Watson remarks that Holmes '*looked worn and haggard, with a little fleck of feverish colour upon either cheek*', a clear indication that Holmes has passed a sleepless night. One cannot help but cry: Oh, Watson, what have you done to your Holmes?

Holmes' mood continues to deteriorate, becoming even blacker after a second trip by Watson to Miss Morstan's. Indeed, Watson tells us:

I walked over to Camberwell in the evening to report our ill-success to the ladies, and on my return I found Holmes dejected and somewhat morose.

Again this can be tied to the ill-success of the case, and yet, even making this assumption, one must question why this case, of all cases, affected Holmes in such a manner? Again, the answer lies with Watson, for Holmes knew that only through solving this case could he win Watson back. Holmes, knowing Watson, and his sense of propriety, knew quite well that Watson would cease to pursue Mary if her station were to change. By retrieving the treasure, Holmes would make Mary a rich woman and thereby negate Watson's interest; Watson would never violate propriety by forcing his attentions on an heiress.

The case alone, however, should not have been enough to render Holmes' mood so black. Clearly there are other forces at work here and the fact that Holmes' mood deteriorates each time Watson visits Mary cannot be mere coincidence.

Knowing all of this, it is not surprising to find Holmes redoubling his efforts. Indeed, the very next day finds him *standing by my bedside, clad in a rude sailor dress with a pea-jacket and a coarse red scarf round his neck*. Holmes' invasion of Watson's privacy

serves not only to announce his leaving, but to once again allow Holmes the pretext of intimacy, something which he undoubtedly feared he had lost forever.

Indeed, in leaving, Holmes asks Watson to remain in Baker Street and act as his intermediary. While Holmes likely feared a lead arriving in his absence, there is no reason he could not have assigned this task to Mrs. Hudson. One cannot help but wonder, then, if Holmes' request was a means to keep Watson from once again visiting Mary.

Holmes returns later that evening, in a much improved mood. He has obviously found what he is searching for and, in doing so, has secured the treasure, which in turn will secure Watson's place by Holmes' side. Indeed, Holmes cannot help but gloat over the matter, telling Watson:

"When we secure the men we shall get the treasure. I think that it would be a pleasure to my friend here to take the box round to the young lady to whom half of it rightfully belongs. Let her be the first to open it. Eh, Watson?"

This simply sentence serves to remind Watson of the treasure, and Mary's stake in it, Holmes' words specifically directed at Watson as if to remind Watson that Watson is too proper to pursue a woman of wealth. Highly manipulative behaviour on Holmes' behalf, but he can be forgiven, for he has grown quite desperate at this point.

Indeed, to drive the point home, and perhaps make amends for his harshness, Holmes mentions that he has arranged for dinner, turning to Watson to state:

"Watson, you have never yet recognized my merits as a housekeeper."

Clearly Holmes is desperate to remind Watson of his merits as, not only a housekeeper, but as a lifelong companion. This trend continues throughout the meal, as Holmes relies on his wit and charm to further woo Watson away from Mary.

Our meal was a merry one. Holmes could talk exceedingly well when he chose, and that night he did choose. He appeared to be in a state of nervous exaltation. I have never known him so brilliant. He spoke on a quick succession of subjects -- on miracle plays, on medieval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the warships of the future -- handling each as though he had made a special study of it. His bright humour marked the reaction from his black depression of the preceding days. Athelney Jones proved to be a sociable soul in his hours of relaxation and faced his dinner with the air of a bon vivant. For myself, I felt elated at the thought that we were nearing the end of our task, and I caught something of Holmes's gaiety. None of us alluded during dinner to the cause which had brought us together.

We cannot help but note Holmes' complete and utter happiness; he has solved the

case, and in short order will have in hand the very means by which to keep Watson at his side. It is also interesting to note that his eloquence is enough to distract Watson from the loss of Mary, Watson quickly swept away by Holmes' gaiety.

Shortly after dinner, Holmes and Watson set out in the company of Inspector Jones to pursue Holmes' lead. Holmes, content that he is about to bring the situation to a satisfactory conclusion, is still apprehensive regarding the execution. Of all of Holmes' cases, failure here presents the most dire of consequences; never before has Holmes had such a personal stake in the outcome of a case.

So anxious is Holmes over the outcome, that during the dramatic chase upon the Thames, he remarks:

"And there is the Aurora," exclaimed Holmes, "and going like the devil! Full speed ahead, engineer. Make after that launch with the yellow light. By heaven, I shall never forgive myself if she proves to have the heels of us!"

We have no doubt that Holmes would not forgive himself for allowing her to slip away. Indeed, Holmes' agitation becomes even more apparent as their pursuit continues.

"We must catch her!" cried Holmes between his teeth. "Heap it on, stokers! Make her do all she can! If we burn the boat we must have them!"

Holmes' desire to catch the boat, and the men on it, is unusually desperate, and it is not unreasonable to assume that Holmes was thinking solely of the treasure, and Mary's stake in it. Should Holmes fail, Mary will remain poor, and within Watson's reach. Should she claim her rightful half, Watson will remain Holmes' forever. Holmes' motives, then, and, indeed, his eagerness to catch the Aurora, are entirely selfish.

They eventually do overtake the Aurora, but sadly for Holmes, although he has caught his man, the treasure is gone; vanquished to the depths of the Thames River, spread out over countless miles, with no hope of retrieval. It is Watson who first discovers this, having driven out to Miss Morstan's home so that she might be the first to open the box. Upon opening it, however, they find the box empty, causing Watson to let out an exclamation of joy. He then tells Mary:

"Because I love you, Mary, as truly as ever a man loved a woman."

While our hearts break for the Great Detective, we cannot help but analyze Watson's statement. That Watson would distinguish that he loves Mary *as truly as ever a man loved a woman* suggests that Watson has loved before (as seen in his use of the word 'ever'), and that he makes the distinction between a woman and a man. We know his

words are truth, and yet, one cannot help but imagine that Watson still loved Holmes, for otherwise Watson might have said, *as truly as a man has ever loved*.

Watson does not remain long by Mary's side, and yet it is curious to note that, upon returning to Baker Street, Watson announces that Mary has accepted him as a husband in prospective. When or how this happened, we do not know, and while the entire event seems improbable (Watson has, after all, only known Mary a few short days) Holmes' reaction to the news is quite telling:

"Well, and there is the end of our little drama," I remarked after we had sat some time smoking in silence. "I fear that it may be the last investigation in which I shall have the chance of studying your methods. Miss Morstan has done me the honour to accept me as a husband in prospective."

He gave a most dismal groan.

"I feared as much," said he. "I really cannot congratulate you."

I was a little hurt.

"Have you any reason to be dissatisfied with my choice?" I asked.

"Not at all. I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way: witness the way in which she preserved that Agra plan from all the other papers of her father. But love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment."

"I trust," said I, laughing, "that my judgment may survive the ordeal. But you look weary."

"Yes, the reaction is already upon me. I shall be as limp as a rag for a week."

Holmes' dismal groan should not come as a surprise, for Holmes has spent the whole of the case attempting to prevent the exact outcome of Watson's statement. The disappointment Holmes must have felt, and indeed, the hurt, is so acute that Holmes is rendered incapable of suppressing his reaction.

Indeed, Holmes goes so far as to voice his disapproval. That he would admit to fearing as much is quite profound; Holmes admitting his worry and fear is in direct contrast to Holmes' usually reserved character.

Holmes does manage to recant the statement, however, as Watson's question allows Holmes to depersonalize the situation, stating that his objection stems from his faculty for logic, something that Watson undoubtedly took at face value. The reader, however,

will see Holmes' excuse for what it is; a thinly veiled attempt to hide his true reaction from Watson and prevent further heartbreak.

Holmes' statement that he should be *limp as a rag for a week* gives us further insight into the Great Detective's mind, the reader instantly aware that this reaction has as much to do with Watson's impending marriage as it does the conclusion of the case.

Watson remains oblivious to this, however, for his subconscious has managed to completely convince himself that he has fallen in love with Mary and will be better off away from Baker Street. Watson cannot help but remark on the unfairness of the situation, though, telling Holmes:

"The division seems rather unfair," I remarked. "You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets the credit, pray what remains for you?"

We hear an indication of regret here, and it is very likely that, in the weeks and months leading up to his marriage, Watson questioned nightly his decision to leave Holmes' side. Indeed, upon hearing Holmes' response, Watson must have reconsidered the matter numerous times.

"For me," said Sherlock Holmes, "there still remains the cocaine-bottle." And he stretched his long white hand up for it.

Holmes has found his distraction, and while there shall forever remain a small hollow where once his heart resided, one cannot help but note the small spark that remained, dimly muted, waiting for a surge of oxygen to once again bring it to life; for why else would Holmes have needed to turn to his cocaine, save but to repair his broken (though not destroyed) heart?

The Hound of the Baskervilles

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates the Hound of the Baskervilles in September/October of 1888. While Watson suggests that the case took place in 1889, scholars are divided over the actual year; some scholars giving a date prior to Holmes' death, others placing it after his return. Given that Watson is living in Baker Street during the case, and does not mention Mary Morstan, it is safe to assume that he was not married at the time. Evidence for a later date can be found in the numerous references to Watson's publications, suggesting that the case took place sometime after the publication of SIGN (1890). The Hound of the Baskervilles was published in serial form between 1901 and 1902.

Synopsis:

Few readers of Canon (if any) will forget the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles, for the curse upon the Baskerville family, as first told by Dr. Mortimer, and later brought to life upon the moors of Dartmoor, is one of the most chilling of all the Sherlock Holmes stories. Sir Henry Baskerville, the last of the Baskerville line, finds himself heir to Baskerville Hall, and a terrible family curse involving a demonic hound, which has plagued the Baskerville family for centuries. Armed only with his courage, and a trusty companion in Watson, Sir Henry takes up his ancient family seat, while Holmes, operating from the shadows, sets about unravelling the mystery. HOUND is perhaps Doyle's finest work, and is, in fact, the most popular of all the Sherlock Holmes stories; widely regarded by many as the pinnacle of Canon.

The Subtext:

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table. I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before.

The story begins in Baker Street, with Holmes enjoying his breakfast, and Watson examining the curious walking stick left behind by a missed visitor. Their conversation, which has become a familiar sight by now, is quite interesting, and, indeed, the perfect

start of what will become a gripping tale.

“Well, Watson, what do you make of it?”

Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my occupation.

“How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.”

“I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me,” said he.

The above scene occurs only moments into the story, and it is interesting to note that, despite the sinister nature of the story, HOUND should open with so playful a scene. We have already remarked upon Holmes’ increasing tendency to engage Watson in his cases, and upon Holmes’ increased dependency on Watson’s observations, and yet this scene demands particular attention for it contains one very interesting characteristic.

“I have, at least, a well-polished, silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me.”

If we use Baring-Gould’s date, then this case takes place seven years into their partnership (and it should be noted that Baring-Gould’s chronology is one of the earliest possible dates). It is remarkable, then, that Holmes should feel the need to observe Watson unseen. Indeed, that Holmes should pass his morning spying on his friend is very indicative of Holmes’ interest in Watson. Clearly, Holmes is still quite fascinated by Watson.

Watson, of course, is more than happy to use Holmes’ opening as an excuse to try his hand at observation and deduction. Holmes seems quite excited by Watson’s participation, going so far as to offer encouragement in the form of praise:

“Really, Watson, you excel yourself,” said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. “I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.”

Aside from the obvious pride in Holmes’ statement, there are several points of interest which warrant particular attention.

First is Holmes’ acknowledgment that Watson understates his own abilities. The reader has long known this to be true (for Watson is far more skilled and intelligent than he gives himself credit for) and yet it is quite remarkable that Holmes should vocalize such a sentiment. Holmes, it would appear, is well aware of Watson’s talents

and virtues, and while one would expect Holmes to demonstrate this solely through his actions (it need not be said that Holmes is a man of verbal restraint), that he should voice these thoughts is truly a sign of Holmes' appreciation for his long-time friend and companion.

We then turn our attention to Holmes' statement that Watson is a conductor of light, capable of stimulating genius. While the author would perhaps disagree with Holmes' assessment that Watson lacks luminosity, it is clear here that Holmes appreciates Watson, not only for his usefulness in the field, but for his capacity to stimulate thought. For a man of Holmes' nature, truly this must have been a very valuable character trait for Watson to possess. We begin to see why Holmes held Watson in such high regard.

Finally, we turn to Holmes' confession that he is in Watson's debt. Again, the reader will recall that Holmes is not known for his openness (nor for showing weakness in the company of others --Watson included), and yet, here he admits that Watson plays a far greater role in Holmes' successes than Watson might have otherwise suspected.

That Holmes should voice such a confession is a sign, not only of the trust between them, or even of how valuable Watson has become, but of the comfort Holmes takes in Watson's presence. One will note, too, that, although this is meant as a compliment, there is an air of insult buried within Holmes' words. While this is very in keeping with the Great Detective, again it speaks to the security between the two men, for otherwise Holmes might have censored himself.

Naturally, Watson is quite pleased by Holmes' compliment, and tells us:

He had never said as much before, and I must admit that his words gave me keen pleasure, for I had often been piqued by his indifference to my admiration and to the attempts which I had made to give publicity to his methods. I was proud, too, to think that I had so far mastered his system as to apply it in a way which earned his approval.

The above statement is quite telling, for here Watson admits to feeling piqued by Holmes' indifference; an act which has become a reoccurring theme in Canon. It is obvious, then, that until this moment Watson felt certain that the admiration and affection that he displayed towards Holmes was entirely one-sided. That Holmes should demonstrate such confidence and admit to such appreciation likely pleased Watson beyond keenness. Watson's reaction, one must confess, is that of an adoring pupil; indeed, one can almost picture the flush of pleasure that likely stained Watson's cheeks at Holmes' words.

It is clear here, too, that Watson has likely picked up on the patronizing tone of Holmes' statement, and yet, Watson does not appear offended. Watson obviously knows Holmes well, and is able, through long association and intimate acquaintance-ship, to read between the lines and know that this is Holmes' way of showing his appreciation.

Watson has, of course, erred in part of his deduction, and Holmes, although reluctantly, feels it necessary to inform Watson of his mistake:

"I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous. When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are entirely wrong in this instance."

While he does confess that Watson was not entirely wrong, Holmes still feels the need to point out one or two quibbles. We have remarked time and time again upon Holmes' need to 'show off' in front of Watson, and this occasion does not differ in that respect. Indeed, Holmes is only too keenly aware that Watson's interest stems largely from Holmes' brilliance, and so, were Watson's talents to ascend to the level of Holmes', Holmes would undoubtedly fear losing Watson's interest. It is therefore entirely necessary that Holmes should dispute Watson and attempt to disprove his theories.

Sadly, this display is interrupted by the arrival of a client; one Dr. Mortimer, the cause of their morning's activities. It is curious here, that upon spotting Mortimer on the street, Holmes' first thought (after confirming the breed of dog) is to request that Watson remain.

Don't move, I beg you, Watson.

We have previously noted Holmes' tendency to rely on Watson's presence during his cases, and here we see no exception. In fact, Holmes resorts to begging in the hope that Watson might agree to remain and lend his assistance.

Although not directly related to the subtextual elements found within this story, it is interesting to note that both Watson and Holmes' deductions were flawed:

"Only that you have disarranged our little deductions".

Holmes, while disappointed, manages to maintain his sense of humour, and one cannot help but picture the scene which must have transpired shortly after Mortimer's leaving; Watson, one cannot doubt, would have been quite pleased to learn that Holmes is also capable of erring.

Dr. Mortimer's arrival does, however, provide for a very interesting presumption. Shortly after clarifying the origins of the stick, Mortimer states:

"I presume that it is Mr. Sherlock Holmes whom I am addressing and not --"

"No, this is my friend Dr. Watson."

He then goes on to mention that he has *heard your name mentioned in connection with that of your friend*, a clear indication that Holmes and Watson are forever bound together in the public's mind. It should be noted that this also provides evidence for a later date.

It is not long after arriving in Baker Street that Dr. Mortimer presents Holmes with a curious manuscript. This provides for a very interesting scene, for it gives Holmes the occasion to request Watson's physical presence.

"You will observe, Watson, the alternative use of the long 's' and the short 't'. It is one of several indications which enabled me to fix the date."

I looked over his shoulder at the yellow paper and the faded script.

In examining Canon, we find numerous occasions in which Holmes arranges matters such that Watson is forced to glance over Holmes' shoulder. Indeed, this occurs so frequently that one cannot help but wonder if perhaps this was done intentionally so that Holmes might occasion Watson's nearness. Aside from the suggestive nature of Holmes' request, it is interesting to note that Watson does not in the least find this odd. Clearly, Watson is quite used to Holmes' demands for Watson's proximity.

Dr. Mortimer's visit lingers some time, and it is during his stay that we first learn of the legend of the Hound of the Baskervilles, and of the imminent arrival of Sir Henry Baskerville and Dr. Mortimer's concerns for Sir Henry's safety. Shortly after his leaving, Holmes falls into study, but not before remarking upon Watson's leaving.

"Going out, Watson?"

"Unless I can help you."

We know that Watson is living in Baker Street, and so Watson has no real reason to leave; he does not have wife, or a home, or patients to return to. It is obvious, then, that Watson has affairs of his own to see to, and yet, upon hearing Holmes' question, Watson clearly offers to stay. This is highly suggestive, for it indicates that Watson places Holmes, and Holmes' needs, before his own.

Holmes, naturally, sends Watson on his way, requesting that he not return until evening. Watson, obeying Holmes' request to the letter, does exactly that, and upon his return, tells us:

My first impression as I opened the door was that a fire had broken out, for the room was so filled with smoke that the light of the lamp upon the table was blurred by it. As I

entered, however, my fears were set at rest, for it was the acrid fumes of strong coarse tobacco which took me by the throat and set me coughing. Through the haze I had a vague vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an armchair with his black clay pipe between his lips. Several rolls of paper lay around him.

While the above passage is interesting in that it infers Watson's fear that Holmes has been consumed by a great fire, and his relief upon discovering that the smoke is only tobacco smoke, what is perhaps more interesting is the conversation which follows:

"Caught cold, Watson?" said he.

"No, it's this poisonous atmosphere."

"I suppose it is pretty thick, now that you mention it."

"Thick! It is intolerable."

"Open the window, then! You have been at your club all day, I perceive."

"My dear Holmes!"

"Am I right?"

"Certainly, but how?"

He laughed at my bewildered expression.

"There is a delightful freshness about you, Watson, which makes it a pleasure to exercise any small powers which I possess at your expense".

Note that this is the second occasion contained within this story in which Holmes remarks to Watson his enjoyment of deducing at Watson's expense. Indeed, there is a freshness about Watson, and it is obvious here that this freshness is part of the reason Holmes so enjoys Watson's company.

The reader will undoubtedly recall the numerous occasions Watson has referred to Holmes' lack of friends. It is interesting, then, that, in explaining the observations which led to his deduction of Watson having passed the day at his club, Holmes states:

"He [Watson] is not a man with intimate friends".

Clearly, then, we have evidence that Watson, like Holmes, is lacking in outside friends. Curious, is it not, that Holmes is the only intimate friend Watson can claim; Watson the only intimate friend Holmes can claim.

Shortly after Watson's return, the pair turn to discussing the case, Holmes describing the setting and some of his own insight, before finally asking Watson his opinion.

"Have you turned the case over in your mind?"

It has become increasingly clear that Watson has now assumed the role of full partner, rather than a mere helpmate.

While Watson is quite bewildered, he is able to inspire Holmes' own deductions; a reoccurring theme within the story and it is quite evident that Watson's role has increased significantly between this case and the last. If Baring-Gould's date is correct, and Watson has only recently become engaged to Mary Morstan, then Holmes' attitude towards Watson, and, indeed, his constant references to the role Watson plays in Holmes' life, can be viewed in an entirely different, and entirely more subtextual, light. While your author prefers to date HOUND at a later date, the theory is worth mentioning.

It is obvious, however, that, Mary Morstan or no Mary Morstan, Holmes and Watson still reside together in Baker Street, and, indeed, lead a rather domestic life. The next morning allows us a glimpse of this life:

Our breakfast table was cleared early, and Holmes waited in his dressing-gown for the promised interview.

The reader will no doubt agree that Watson's reference to *our breakfast table* and his description of Holmes' attire paint a rather intimate portrait.

This scene of domesticity is cut short by the arrival of Dr. Mortimer and Sir Henry. While their meeting lasts some time, and presents little in the line of subtextual content, it is curious to note that, upon leaving, Sir Henry pauses to invite Holmes and Watson to lunch.

"Suppose you and your friend, Dr. Watson, come round and lunch with us at two".

While Sir Henry has come with the express purpose of seeing Holmes, he still invites the pair to lunch. This is curious, as it again suggests that the public is more than well aware of the relationship between Holmes and Watson. Indeed, that a client should presume that the pair would dine together is quite telling.

Perhaps even more telling, however, is Holmes' response:

"Is that convenient to you, Watson?"

That Holmes' first thought should be to inquire into Watson's schedule (and he is, in essence, asking Watson's permission), is far more indicative of a husband speaking to a wife than of a friend speaking to his companion.

Watson, of course, agrees to the lunch, and Holmes relays this information to Sir Henry, upon which Sir Henry and Dr. Mortimer take their leave. Moments after they have departed from Baker Street, Holmes springs into action, and drags Watson down onto the street so that they might follow their departed guests.

Their delay, however, has set them back some *two hundred yards* and Watson, being

the man of action that he is, offers to *run on and stop them*. Holmes' reply, one will agree, borders on romantic.

"Not for the world, my dear Watson. I am perfectly satisfied with your company if you will tolerate mine. Our friends are wise, for it is certainly a very fine morning for a walk."

While we will later learn Holmes' reasons for wishing a *walk*, it is amusing to note Holmes' explanation, for truly one cannot help but feel certain that Holmes spoke the truth when he suggested that he was satisfied with enjoying a fine morning stroll at Watson's side.

Their walk comes to an end a short time later. Having scared off Sir Henry's pursuer, Holmes and Watson make their way into the messenger's office to dispatch an inquiry into the cab that was driving Sir Henry's shadow. Upon leaving, Holmes realizes that there is nothing more that can be done until their lunch with Sir Henry, and so suggests they fill their time in some other capacity.

"...and then we will drop into one of the Bond Street picture galleries and fill in the time until we are due at the hotel."

This is one of the many examples of Holmes' desire to spend both his personal and his professional time by Watson's side. Indeed, the two men seem to spend a great deal of time together, and yet, despite this, Holmes (a man perpetually bored by inactivity) never seems to tire of Watson's company.

He would talk of nothing but art, of which he had the crudest ideas, from our leaving the gallery until we found ourselves at the Northumberland Hotel.

It is interesting, too, to note that Holmes apparently took Watson to see a collection of nudes.

Shortly after arriving at the Northumberland Hotel and seeing Sir Henry, Holmes decides that it is imperative that Sir Henry not return to Baskerville Hall alone. Indeed, Holmes tells Sir Henry:

"No, Sir Henry, you must take with you someone, a trusty man, who will be always by your side."

Sir Henry, discovering that Holmes is otherwise engaged, inquires into whom Holmes might recommend. Holmes' response, and indeed, his actions are quite touching.

Holmes laid his hand upon my arm.

"If my friend would undertake it there is no man who is better worth having at your side when you are in a tight place. No one can say so more confidently than I."

Again we are witness to a great compliment from Holmes, for truly, no man can say so more confidently than he. That Holmes might accompany this compliment with such a tender gesture is also quite telling, for it is obvious here that Holmes does place his full confidence in Watson's ability, and wishes, not only Sir Henry to know this, but for Watson to know it as well.

Naturally, Watson agrees, and arrangements are made. Upon returning to Baker Street, Holmes shows his appreciation and, indeed, his love for Watson by remarking upon his concern for Watson's safety.

"I can only wish you better luck in Devonshire. But I'm not easy in my mind about it."

"About what?"

"About sending you. It's an ugly business, Watson, an ugly dangerous business, and the more I see of it the less I like it. Yes my dear fellow, you may laugh, but I give you my word that I shall be very glad to have you back safe and sound in Baker Street once more."

If, indeed, we are using Baring-Gould's chronology, and this case does take place shortly before Watson's marriage, then Holmes' remarkable behaviour can be attributed to his desire for Watson to know the true depth of his feelings. If, as your author suspects, this case can be dated after Watson's marriage (and indeed, after Holmes' return) then it is evident that Holmes and Watson are a very much established couple by this point, Holmes worrying, not only for a friend, by for a life-long, intimate partner. That he should vocalize these concerns is quite unlike Holmes, and speaks to the depth of his feelings for Watson.

Indeed, Holmes seems so preoccupied with Watson in this story that he goes so far as to travel with Watson to the train station (the modern day equivalent of taking one's spouse to the airport).

Mr. Sherlock Holmes drove with me to the station and gave me his last parting injunctions and advice.

Holmes' worry continues, as seen in his parting instructions.

"Most certainly. Keep your revolver near you night and day, and never relax your precautions."

While Holmes has expressed concern for Watson's safety before, never has he been more obvious than in this scene. Indeed, Holmes' worry borders on paranoia, and one cannot help but wonder at the cause behind this. We have touched on the potential of Watson's impending marriage and on the potential for a deepening relationship, and yet, Holmes' manner around Watson seems to indicate that Holmes is truly incapable

of spending any period of time apart from his Watson. It is not too far of a stretch, then, to assume that Holmes is officially ‘in over his head’ where Watson is concerned. That he should take to ‘wearing his heart on his sleeve’ is so unlike the detective that one can only look to Watson’s influence in order to find an explanation. Truly, Holmes’ relationship with Watson has changed Holmes for the better.

Watson’s leave-taking marks a shift in the story, for the tale now becomes Watson’s, Holmes disappearing into the background (to worry frantically over his Watson’s safety, no doubt).

Watson, ever Watson, seems unconcerned by the subtle shift in Holmes’ behaviour, and even goes so far as to admire the physical characteristics of another man. This occurs shortly after arriving at Baskerville Hall, where, upon meeting the butler, Watson states:

He was a remarkable-looking man, tall, handsome, with a square black beard and pale, distinguished features.

A clear indication of where Watson’s preferences lay; his heart may belong to Holmes, and yet his eyes are free to wander, and when they do wander, it is frequently his own sex that holds Watson’s attention.

Barrymore’s attractiveness cannot distract Watson for long, however, and shortly after arriving in Baskerville Hall, Watson finds his thoughts turning to Holmes. Indeed, Watson soon confesses his desire to have Holmes by his side, a clear indication of just how much Watson misses Holmes.

I prayed, as I walked back along the gray, lonely road, that my friend might soon be freed from his preoccupations and able to come down to take this heavy burden of responsibility from my shoulders.

Aside from feeling out of his depth, the reader is well aware that Watson is far more capable than he himself realizes. Could it be, then, that Watson’s subconscious was merely craving Holmes’ presence? That Watson, being the proper gentlemen that he was, expressed this in such a way as to suggest that it was Holmes’ insight he longed for?

Indeed, Watson’s subconscious seems quite distracted by Holmes’ absence, for, upon meeting Stapleton, Watson is quite taken aback by Stapleton’s question regarding Holmes’ interest in the matter.

“Has Mr. Sherlock Holmes?” [formed a theory on the case]

The words took away my breath for an instant...

We can, of course, forgive Watson for this momentary lapse of oxygen, for the thought of Holmes always leaves him quite flustered. It is, however, curious to note that, again, Watson's presence is associated with Holmes. Clearly, the public is only too aware of the intimate bond between the two men. Indeed, Stapleton, upon explaining how he deduced Sherlock Holmes' involvement, states:

"The records of your detective have reached us here..."

The author wishes to draw particular attention to Stapleton referring to Holmes as *your detective*. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that the entire world knows that Holmes belongs to Watson; and that Watson belongs to Holmes.

Of course, Watson does not soon forget about Holmes; indeed, he spends the bulk of his time alone in Dartmoor thinking of Holmes. This is particularly evident when one examines the several chapters devoted to Watson's letters and diary entries. While I will not include the entirety of these letters and entries, they do speak to the informality and intimate familiarity of Holmes and Watson's relationship. Several particularly noteworthy passages have been given:

All this, however, is foreign to the mission on which you sent me and will probably be very uninteresting to your severely practical mind. I can still remember your complete indifference as to whether the sun moved round the earth or the earth round the sun. Let me, therefore, return to the facts concerning Sir Henry Baskerville.

Watson has just spent some time describing the gloomy atmosphere of the moor, and then, remembering to whom it was he was writing, he quickly changes gears and apologizes for his distraction. This particular passage is interesting in that it not only indicates Watson's complete awareness of Holmes and Holmes' expectations, but calls to mind an incident that occurred some time ago (indeed, the exchange can be found in *A Study In Scarlet*, which, when using Baring-Gould's chronology, occurred some seven years prior). Truly Watson's memory is long, and it is curious to note that his memory is most keen when it comes to facts and incidences surrounding Sherlock Holmes.

His attention to detail in this first letter is also quite remarkable, for he writes to Holmes as though he is writing a story, despite knowing Holmes' distaste for Watson's 'romanticisms'. This, coupled with Watson's introduction of *My Dear Holmes*, gives the impression of a very intimate correspondence, rather than a mere progress report. Watson, then, is obviously writing, not to his colleague, but rather, to his close and intimate friend.

It becomes increasingly evident that Watson is writing for the sake of writing, rather than the sake of reporting, for although knows he must give Holmes the facts, he cannot help but discuss his day as though he were unwinding alongside Holmes in Baker Street.

You are aware that I am not a very sound sleeper, and since I have been on guard in this house my slumbers have been lighter than ever.

Watson then goes on to include several rather intimate suggestions, without providing explanation, for he knows that Holmes knows him more completely than any man ever could (for how else should Holmes know that Watson was a light sleeper?).

So personal are these letters that Watson even admits to several of his follies, trusting Holmes to do what he will with them, despite the fact that they are not entirely needed.

But when I came to think the matter over my conscience reproached me bitterly for having on any pretext allowed him to go out of my sight. I imagined what my feelings would be if I had to return to you and to confess that some misfortune had occurred through my disregard for your instructions. I assure you my cheeks flushed at the very thought.

The above passage comes shortly after Watson has allowed Sir Henry to head out upon the moor without escort. That Watson would confess to the flushing of his cheeks, and to his fear of disappointing Holmes, is quite remarkable.

In fact, we get the sense that Watson is quite concerned that he might somehow disappoint Holmes. This is to be expected, and yet, it is quite surprising to note how often Watson feels comfortable mentioning this to Holmes.

Congratulate me, my dear Holmes, and tell me that I have not disappointed you as an agent -- that you do not regret the confidence which you showed in me when you sent me down.

The need for approval here is quite obvious, but so too is Watson's desire to have Holmes by his side. He understands Holmes' need to remain in London, and yet, feels unworthy of Holmes' trust. His need for Holmes becomes so prevalent that Watson willing confesses:

Best of all would it be if you could come down to us.

Aside from the content of the letters, which are quite suggestive, there is the length of the letters; each of Watson's letters spanning several pages, and one often gets the impression that he is rambling without direction. It is now blindingly obvious that Watson misses his Holmes.

In fact, Watson's desire to have Holmes by his side leads to a single-minded obsession with a stranger he has seen upon the moor. This is quite significant, for we will later learn that this stranger is, in fact, Holmes.

He had not seen this lonely man upon the moor and could not feel the thrill which his strange presence and his commanding attitude had given to me.

It is quite curious that Watson, ignorant to Holmes' presence, should feel such a thrill at this man's *commanding* presence. That Watson finds himself drawn to this stranger should have perhaps clued him in to Holmes' presence, and yet, it is enough that Watson is drawn: so drawn, in fact, that Watson expends a good portion of his diary entries in pondering over the man's identity.

When Watson is not obsessing over this mysterious stranger, he is obsessing over Holmes. In fact, Watson, overcome by the uncertainty he feels at having heard the baying of a hound upon the moor, convinces himself that there is a natural explanation, stating that *Holmes would not listen to such fancies, and I am his agent*. It is quite suggestive that Watson, by imagining Holmes' response, should so quickly alleviate his fears.

Watson's preoccupation with Holmes is not limited to his thoughts. Indeed, Watson spends a good deal of his time in Dartmoor writing to Holmes.

I went at once to my room and drew up my report of the morning's conversation for Holmes. It was evident to me that he had been very busy of late, for the notes which I had from Baker Street were few and short, with no comments upon the information which I had supplied and hardly any reference to my mission. No doubt his blackmailing case is absorbing all his faculties. And yet this new factor must surely arrest his attention and renew his interest. I wish that he were here.

It should be noted that this is neither the first nor the second time in which Watson has expressed his desire to have Holmes by his side. Watson is lost without his Holmes. Note, too, Watson's wistful tone; the dejection he feels at having not heard from Holmes in some time.

Despite Holmes' absence at this point in the story, we are, through Watson's narrative, made aware of his presence. Again and again Watson refers to his friend, his narrative littered with subtle references to Holmes and Holmes' involvement in the case.

I have not lived for years with Sherlock Holmes for nothing.

While providing clues to the time line, this statement also makes it clear that Watson has gained quite a lot through his residency with Holmes. Although, on occasion,

Watson has been known to complain of Holmes, and his singular habits, it is obvious that Watson would endure all of Holmes' vices for the chance to spend a lifetime at Holmes' side.

It is here that the case slowly climbs to one of its climaxes. Watson, still obsessed with the mysterious man upon the moor, decides to head out in search of him. It is interesting to note Watson's conviction; his certainty that he should find the man. This is tied, we will see, directly to Holmes, for Watson states:

Holmes had missed him in London. It would indeed be a triumph for me if I could run him to earth where my master had failed.

Watson has, of course, erred, and the man he seeks is not the man in the cab, but rather, Holmes himself. We will touch on Holmes' dramatic unveiling in a moment, but, for now, allow us to examine Watson's curious statement. That Watson should refer to Holmes as his *master* is quite remarkable, for this is perhaps the first occasion upon which Watson has, in his narrative, deferred so largely to Holmes' masterful nature. Indeed, Watson's eagerness to succeed where Holmes failed is not due to any competition, but rather, a blinding need to please Holmes. Truly, Watson is a man so enraptured by Holmes that he will do anything, and everything, within his power to succeed in the task entrusted to him.

Watson does not, of course, find his mysterious stranger, for it is upon his discovery of the stranger's lair that we discover the stranger's true identity.

Holmes' dramatic appearance on the moor is one of the most shocking scenes in the entire story. It is of interest to the student of subtext as well, for Holmes' opening remarks contain several points of interest.

"It is a lovely evening, my dear Watson," said a well-known voice. "I really think that you will be more comfortable outside than in."

We have learnt that Holmes has had Watson watched, and yet, he admits later to not knowing Watson was inside his secreted hide-away until spotting Watson's cigarette stub. It is interesting, then, that Holmes should announce his presence in such a manner. He knows Watson is inside, but he knows Watson well enough to announce his presence; Holmes undoubtedly well aware of Watson's tendency to draw his revolver in situations of danger. That Holmes should announce his arrival with so casual a remark is also evidence of the pride Holmes felt at Watson having fleshed him out.

Watson's reaction, too, is of particular note:

For a moment or two I sat breathless, hardly able to believe my ears. Then my senses and

my voice came back to me, while a crushing weight of responsibility seemed in an instant to be lifted from my soul. That cold, incisive, ironical voice could belong to but one man in all the world.

"Holmes!" I cried -- "Holmes!"

One can almost hear the relief and delight in Watson's tone. Watson's momentary shock is penetrated by the realization that his Holmes has arrived, and Watson, weightless for the first time in weeks, is incapable of suppressing his glee. Indeed, that he should tell us that the voice belonged to *but one man* is very suggestive in itself, for it implies that there is but one man in the world.

So desperate to see Holmes again is Watson that his first thought it to categorize Holmes' appearance, Watson likely spending several moments glancing over Holmes' form and committing the sight to memory.

I stooped under the rude lintel, and there he sat upon a stone outside, his gray eyes dancing with amusement as they fell upon my astonished features. He was thin and worn, but clear and alert, his keen face bronzed by the sun and roughened by the wind. In his tweed suit and cloth cap he looked like any other tourist upon the moor, and he had contrived, with that catlike love of personal cleanliness which was one of his characteristics, that his chin should be as smooth and his linen as perfect as if he were in Baker Street.

Then, still unable to suppress his happiness, Watson confesses:

"I never was more glad to see anyone in my life," said I as I wrung him by the hand.

And truly we do believe him. Note that Watson does not merely shake Holmes' hand, but indeed, wrings him by the hand. One can easily imagine that it was only Watson's strong sense of propriety that prevented him from drawing Holmes into a great hug; that, of course, and Watson's intimate awareness that such an act would likely lead to Holmes' discomfort. Still, he must find an outlet for his desire, and so a wrung hand will do.

While it is tempting to replicate their entire exchange, as it does present several points of interest, I will instead draw your attention to Watson's second admission:

"Well, I am glad from my heart that you are here, for indeed the responsibility and the mystery were both becoming too much for my nerves".

One can easily imagine that the loss of responsibility is not on its own cause for Watson's gladness. Indeed, his happiness at seeing Holmes blares so bright that it becomes quite evident that Watson longs for Holmes' presence for personal reasons, as well as professional.

Although quite thrilled by Holmes' presence, Watson is also quite perplexed, and inquires into how Holmes came to be on the moor. Holmes' answer, however, does not sit well with Watson, and Watson, upon discovering that Holmes has been in Dartmoor some time, cries:

"Then you use me, and yet do not trust me!" I cried with some bitterness. "I think that I have deserved better at your hands, Holmes."

One can almost hear the sound of Watson's heart breaking, and yet, Holmes is only too ready with a reply, his apology one of the most sincere apologies in all of Canon.

"My dear fellow, you have been invaluable to me in this as in many other cases, and I beg that you will forgive me if I have seemed to play a trick upon you. In truth, it was partly for your own sake that I did it, and it was my appreciation of the danger which you ran which led me to come down and examine the matter for myself."

Note the use of *my dear fellow*, Holmes truly concerned that Watson might bear some grudge. Then there are his assurances that Watson is invaluable to him; not to mention his begging for Watson's forgiveness. Finally, there is his statement that he *appreciated the danger which you ran*, an indication, and confession, of Holmes' fears for Watson's safety. Clearly, Holmes adores his Watson, and would do anything to keep Watson safe, including risking Watson's anger.

Watson is still hurt, however, and moved to near tears at the thought of having lost Holmes' trust.

"Then my reports have all been wasted!" -- My voice trembled as I recalled the pains and the pride with which I had composed them.

Holmes, sensing the torrent of emotion building within Watson's breast, does not hesitate to produce Watson's reports.

Holmes took a bundle of papers from his pocket.

"Here are your reports, my dear fellow, and very well thumbed, I assure you. I made excellent arrangements, and they are only delayed one day upon their way. I must compliment you exceedingly upon the zeal and the intelligence which you have shown over an extraordinarily difficult case."

Here Holmes goes a step further and compliments Watson on his *zeal and intelligence*, a rare and yet touching compliment from Holmes.

Although still hurt by Holmes' deception, Watson is swayed by the *warmth of Holmes' praise* and is soon able to see the logic in Holmes' actions. Holmes, we shall see, is quite relieved by this, and states:

"That's better," said he, seeing the shadow rise from my face.

Holmes then turns his attention to the case, hoping to distract Watson from his hurt and upset. The plan works, and the two men sit side by side, upon the lonely moor, lost in conversation.

The sun had set and dusk was settling over the moor. The air had turned chill and we withdrew into the hut for warmth. There sitting together in the twilight, I told Holmes of my conversation with the lady. So interested was he that I had to repeat some of it twice before he was satisfied.

A more romantic scene could not have been painted.

The conversation itself presents several points of interest, but perhaps the most fitting is Watson's comment:

"Surely there is no need of secrecy between you and me."

Indeed, the trust between them, built over the passage of years, has reached a point where Watson now demands all of Holmes' secrets, and Holmes, trusting implicitly in Watson, gives them over freely.

Sadly, their hushed conversation is interrupted by a great cry of horror. Holmes, springing into action, dashes towards the door of the hut. Watson's description, one must agree, is quite sensual in nature:

Holmes had sprung to his feet, and I saw his dark, athletic outline at the door of the hut...

Note Watson's use of the term athletic, a description which calls to mind attraction. Clearly, despite everything that has passed between them, and everything that the case entails, Watson is not beyond pausing to admire Holmes' form.

The pair rush out onto the moor, certain that they are on the trail of the hound. Holmes, we will see, is quite out of sorts, and turns, on several occasions, to Watson for reassurance and comfort.

"Where is it?" Holmes whispered; and I knew from the thrill of his voice that he, the man of iron, was shaken to the soul. "Where is it, Watson?"

Note the urgency in Holmes' voice; the need to have Watson by his side. Truly, Holmes needs Watson just as much as Watson needs Holmes. Apart, they are incomplete.

They do not find the hound, but they do find a body they believe to be Sir Henry's. Holmes is furious, and, indeed, quite distraught that his case should end in such a manner. Soon, however, they discover that the body is not that of Sir Henry, but that

of Selden, the escaped convict. Holmes, filled with renewed purpose, surprises Watson by his actions.

Now he was dancing and laughing and wringing my hand. Could this be my stern, self-contained friend? These were hidden fires, indeed!

My dear Watson; you, of all people, should know of hidden fires.

Shortly after this discovery, and a chance meeting with Stapleton, Holmes and Watson return to Baskerville Hall, where, upon meeting with Sir Henry, they engage in a late supper. Sitting down to dinner, Holmes becomes distracted by a very singular painting, which leads to a most amusing conversation regarding art. Holmes, admiring the painting, states:

“Watson won’t allow that I know anything of art but that is mere jealousy because our views upon the subject differ.”

It is fascinating to note that Holmes and Watson engage their time discussing art, but perhaps even more fascinating is that it is a source of argument. That Holmes should comment on such a thing is suggestive not only in the implication that these discussions occur regularly, but that it seems more a comment one would make of a spouse than of a friend.

The completion of a late night supper leads them into the next morning, and the staging of the final climax. Holmes has arranged for Sir Henry to dine with the Stapleton’s, while he and Watson are to return to London. Watson, not knowing Holmes’ full plans, and not fully understanding the need to return to London, agrees to this course of events without question, placing his implicit trust in Holmes, as he has done on so many occasions.

But Holmes and Watson do not return to London, instead making their way in secret back out onto the moor, where they lay in wait to spring their trap. Despite the foggy gloom of the night, and the chill of the air, Watson pauses to admire Holmes’ features. He tells us:

I was at Holmes’s elbow, and I glanced for an instant at his face. It was pale and exultant, his eyes shining brightly in the moonlight.

One cannot help but picture Watson, pressed against Holmes’ side, glancing over his shoulder to look upon Holmes’ face, watching with such admiration and awe as Holmes stares, transfixed, into the darkness.

The moment of silence is broken, however, by the devilish howl of the hound, and soon Holmes and Watson are forced to spring into action. A dramatic chase ensues,

and it is not until some time later, after the case has been put to rest, that Holmes and Watson once again find themselves in the warmth and comfort of Baker Street. Holmes, at Watson's requests, narrates the chain of events which first led him to unravel the mystery of the Hound of the Baskervilles. He concludes his summation with an invitation and the student of subtext will be interested to note that this case, like so many others, ends in a pleasant evening out.

And now, my dear Watson, we have had some weeks of severe work, and for one evening, I think, we may turn our thoughts into more pleasant channels. I have a box for 'Les Huguenots.' Have you heard the De Reszkes? Might I trouble you then to be ready in half an hour, and we can stop at Marcini's for a little dinner on the way?"

A date, Watson! A distinct date!

The Copper Beeches

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates the Adventure of the Copper Beeches on April 5, 1889. According to Baring-Gould, this is just a few short weeks before Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan. While Watson does not mention a date, he is living in Baker Street, and does reference several cases as past events (most notably: The Blue Carbuncle, A Scandal in Bohemia, The Noble Bachelor, A Case of Identity, and The Man with the Twisted Lip). Given that Watson was married in several of these cases (The Blue Carbuncle, A Scandal in Bohemia, etc.), and that the story was published before Holmes' return (and hence before Mary's death) it is reasonable to assume that this case took place sometime during Watson's marriage to Miss Morstan. The story was first published in June, 1892.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes has truly touched bottom, or so he supposes when he is approached by an out of work governess; a Miss Violet Hunter, who seeks Holmes' opinion as to whether or not she should accept a situation. The case is not without merit, however, and Holmes soon finds that he is intrigued by the singular behaviour of Miss Violet's employers; including their condition that she cut off all her hair. Perhaps even more telling, however, is the behaviour of Miss Hunter's small charge; the child's unusually cruel disposition enough to convince Holmes that the woman Miss Violet has been unknowingly impersonating is in grave danger.

The Subtext:

Before we begin examining the subtextual elements contained within this story, I felt it important that we take a moment and turn our attention to the dating of this story.

If we assume Baring-Gould's chronology, then The Adventure of the Copper Beeches is set in April of 1889. According to Baring-Gould, this date occurs shortly before Watson's marriage to Miss Morstan (Baring-Gould's date for Watson's marriage being May 1, 1889). Recall that Watson first met Mary in The Sign of Four, which, according to Baring-Gould, occurred in September of 1888. Finally, Baring-Gould dates The

Hound of the Baskervilles in October of 1888.

In chronological order, then: Watson meets Mary in September of 1888. Watson then abandons Mary to spend several weeks on the moors of Dartmoor in October of 1888. Several months pass, and in the early spring of 1889, Watson assists Holmes with Violet Hunter's case, never once mentioning his fiancée, despite his impending nuptials.

If we assume your author's chronology (and date *The Adventures of the Copper Beeches* during Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan), then it is obvious that Watson is (temporarily) living apart from his wife. Throughout the story, Watson refers to Baker Street and its contents with the possessive *our*, implying that Watson is, indeed, living in Baker Street. If this is the case, and your author is correct, then Watson and Mary have obviously, at some point in their marriage, had cause for separation. Is it too much to suggest, then, that Holmes, and Holmes' relationship with Watson, is somehow directly tied to their rift?

We have noted in previous essays Watson's tendency to abandon Mary for Holmes, implying exactly where Watson's priorities lay, so it is reasonable to assume that Mary should one day object to Watson's constant dismissal. We can take this theory a step further and suggest that Mary's death is also an assumption. Recall that Watson does not implicitly tell us that she has passed. Might her disappearance (and Holmes' condolences) be the result of a messy divorce? We will, of course, return to this theory as this series continues. For now, let us return to the story at hand.

"To the man who loves art for its own sake," remarked Sherlock Holmes, tossing aside the advertisement sheet of the Daily Telegraph, "it is frequently in its least important and lowliest manifestations that the keenest pleasure is to be derived. It is pleasant to me to observe, Watson, that you have so far grasped this truth that in these little records of our cases which you have been good enough to draw up, and, I am bound to say, occasionally to embellish, you have given prominence not so much to the many causes celebres and sensational trials in which I have figured, but rather to those incidents which may have been trivial in themselves, but which have given room for those faculties of deduction and of logical synthesis which I have made my special province."

So begins *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*, and we are indeed on familiar ground. How often has Holmes taken to criticizing Watson's writing and the manner in which Watson portrays Holmes' art? While this does present an interesting opening for analysis, let us turn first to the single compliment contained within Holmes' state-

ment.

Holmes suggests that Watson has a good eye, and that he is quite adept at choosing the cases which best exhibit Holmes' singular talents. This is suggestive for two reasons. In the first, it is interesting to note that Watson does choose cases which highlight Holmes' talents, and not cases which highlight sensationalistic crime. Were Watson truly the romantic Holmes claims him to be, it is very likely that Watson, in an attempt to appeal to his readers, would focus entirely on the cause-celebres. That Watson does not gives us insight into Watson's reasons for chronicling Holmes' cases. Watson is not interested in the case, or even in appeasing his readers. He is interested in Holmes. Holmes is his subject, and Watson devotes the whole of his being to the study of this subject.

We must now examine Holmes' motives for bestowing this compliment. Throughout Canon, Holmes, on several occasions, has gone out of his way to downplay Watson's writing, and yet, frequently, Holmes is the first to admit that Watson's writing has merit. One can easily imagine that Holmes was quite flattered by Watson's writing, and that Holmes recognized that some credit for his success and fame was due to Watson's work. And yet, that alone is not reason enough for Holmes to idly mention his appreciation of Watson's talent. Could it be, then, that Holmes was attempting to flatter Watson? That Holmes, in complimenting Watson, was attempting to win Watson's affections?

This second theory is particularly interesting when one examines it in terms of chronology. If we assume Baring-Gould's chronology, then Watson's wedding is fast approaching, and Holmes' actions can be seen as a 'last ditch' attempt to convince Watson to remain in Baker Street. If we assume a later date, then Watson has returned to Baker Street, likely during a spat with his wife, and Holmes, knowing this, would have gone out of his way to ensure Watson had reason to remain.

Holmes, however, is incapable of bestowing a compliment without later pointing out Watson's shortcomings. He does exactly this, and Watson, predictably, becomes quite upset.

"It seems to me that I have done you full justice in the matter," I remarked with some coldness, for I was repelled by the egotism which I had more than once observed to be a strong factor in my friend's singular character.

"No, it is not selfishness or conceit," said he, answering, as was his wont, my thoughts rather than my words.

Watson's anger is not surprising, nor is it particularly interesting. What is of interest, especially to the student of subtext, is Holmes' response. Recall that Watson tells us:

...answering, as was his wont, my thoughts rather than my words.

The implications in this statement are staggering. That Holmes is capable of reading Watson's thoughts is not surprising. What is surprising is Watson's reaction to this. He seems perfectly content, and indeed, familiar with this particular habit. This is very indicative of a close and extremely intimate relationship. Were two friends to exhibit such a feat, the result would be strange and unusual. Were two lovers to accomplish the same, the result would be commonplace.

We can now safely return to our original point of analysis; namely, Holmes' perpetual need to criticize Watson's work. We have already noted that Holmes was well aware that a share of his success and fame rested at Watson's feet. We have noted, too, that Holmes was likely quite flattered by Watson's writing. So why, then, did Holmes feel the need to downplay Watson's talent?

It is entirely possible that Holmes feared Watson's writing should one day lead Watson to unravel Holmes' methods; an act which, undoubtedly, would have rendered Holmes obsolete. As Holmes' obsolescence would have eventually led to Watson's disinterest, it is reasonable to assume that Holmes very much feared Watson mastering the art of deduction, not only for the loss of a career, but for the loss of a companion as well. It is entirely possible that Holmes' criticism was an attempt to dissuade Watson from his hobby.

It is also quite possible that Holmes' criticism stemmed from self consciousness. Watson's writing shared Holmes' talents with the world, but more than that, it shared Holmes with the world. For Holmes, a man of retiring characteristics, this must have had the effect of double-edged sword. Notoriety would have brought Holmes interesting cases (and we cannot doubt that Holmes enjoyed much of the fame and publicity) but it brought, too, a distinct lack of privacy. It is entirely likely that Holmes resented the intrusion on his (and more aptly, his and Watson's) private life.

In many of Watson's cases, Watson paints Holmes as an automaton. While the reader is well aware that this description is unworthy of Holmes, one cannot help but wonder if Holmes' reaction to Watson's writing was a further attempt to convince Watson that Holmes really was incapable of human emotion. As Holmes' criticism stemmed from Watson's inability to depict Holmes' cases in a cold and scientific manner, it is reasonable to assume that this tied directly into Watson's perception of Holmes. It is

also reasonable, then, to suggest that Holmes intentionally manipulated Watson's perception, perhaps in an effort to distance himself from the growing connection Holmes felt towards Watson. We know Holmes tended to shy away from all forms of human emotion, and one can easily imagine that Holmes felt some need to protect himself from the emotional bond which tied him to Watson.

Whatever the reason, it is interesting to note that Holmes' criticism, and Watson's dejection at this criticism, are reoccurring themes in Canon, and while it would be quite interesting to examine this theme as it spreads throughout Canon, we must return now to the story, and the arrival of Miss Violet Hunter.

As he spoke the door opened and a young lady entered the room.

Violet Hunter's arrival falls on the heels of Holmes and Watson's rather heated discussion, and allows us to examine a second theory, one that is infinitely more interesting, not to mention widely discussed in many Sherlockian circles.

Baring-Gould suggests that Miss Violet Hunter was, in truth, a huntress, and that it was Sherlock Holmes who was her quarry. Baring-Gould's opinion is shared by many Sherlockians, and, as such, it is worth examining in subtextual terms.

We must, however, begin by examining the subtextual evidence which suggests that Miss Hunter had some design on Holmes.

Shortly after arriving, Miss Hunter recounts her strange first meeting with her soon to be employer, and, in telling her tale, very consciously extols her better qualities. It is interesting to note, here, that many of the talents she claims are very much in keeping with Holmes' interests.

"My accomplishments, sir, may be less than you imagine," said I. 'A little French, a little German, music, and drawing--'

The reader will recall that Holmes speaks fluent French and German, and that he is an avid music lover.

Miss Hunter's subtlety, however, fails to impress Holmes, and so Miss Hunter is forced to become quite brazen in her pursuit.

As you may observe, Mr. Holmes, my hair is somewhat luxuriant, and of a rather peculiar tint of chestnut. It has been considered artistic.

While I am sure the reader will agree that the above statement is hardly subtle, what is perhaps even less subtle is her claim that she is in need of Holmes' advice. This is particularly interesting when one examines her parting comment:

"That is the letter which I have just received, Mr. Holmes, and my mind is made up that

I will accept it. I thought, however, that before taking the final step I should like to submit the whole matter to your consideration."

"Well, Miss Hunter, if your mind is made up, that settles the question," said Holmes, smiling.

Holmes could not have said it better; if her mind is made up, the question is settled, and there is no real reason for her to have sought out Holmes' aid.

This attempted wooing on Violet Hunter's behalf continues, Miss Hunter going so far as to tell Holmes that she is *naturally observant*, a talent which she no doubt hoped might impress Holmes. Even her eventual summons of *do come* speaks of intimacy. When one examines Miss Hunter's mannerisms and directness, one is instantly impressed by the certainty that Violet Hunter is not a woman in need of assistance, but rather, a woman with very clear designs. One cannot help but wonder, then, if she was in any way involved in creating the elaborate hoax which first brought Holmes out to Hampshire. After all, what is a woman's hair next to the love of a world famous detective?

While the above theory has been discussed before, the student of subtext may wish to take this theory a step further and examine what role, if any, Watson might have played in this most cunning plot.

Shortly before Miss Hunter arrives in Baker Street, Holmes hands Watson the letter he received that morning, requesting that Watson read it. The letter is from Violet Hunter, and while it does not present any features of interest, Watson's reaction is quite interesting. First, he asks if Holmes knows *the young lady*, an obvious attempt to discern whether Holmes might be at all suspicious.

Holmes ensures Watson that he does not, upon which, Watson, perhaps in his relief, attempts to persuade Holmes to take the case.

"It may turn out to be of more interest than you think. You remember that the affair of the blue carbuncle, which appeared to be a mere whim at first, developed into a serious investigation. It may be so in this case, also."

Quite a suggestive statement, one must agree, for Watson clearly wishes Holmes to take an interest in this case. There is nothing in the letter to suggest that it may be of *more interest than you think*, so why else, save that Watson had arranged this meeting, would Watson have felt the need to make this particular comment?

Indeed, if we need further confirmation regarding Watson's involvement, one must only examine Watson's disappointment at the closure of the case. Here, Watson tells

us:

As to Miss Violet Hunter, my friend Holmes, rather to my disappointment, manifested no further interest in her when once she had ceased to be the centre of one of his problems...

Watson clearly states that he is disappointed that Holmes failed to manifest any further interest in Miss Hunter. What possible reason could lead to this comment, save that Watson had intentionally arranged this meeting in the hopes that Holmes might have developed a romantic interest in Violet Hunter?

We assume, then, that Watson was responsible for Miss Hunter's arrival at Baker Street (the validity of the case notwithstanding, for Watson could have just as easily heard the woman's curious story elsewhere --perhaps Miss Hunter, a fellow governess, is a friend of Mary Morstan's?), and that, through this meeting, Watson hoped that Holmes might develop a romantic attraction to Miss Hunter. If this is the case, then we must question Watson's motives.

If we are using Baring-Gould's chronology, then Watson is set to marry in a few short weeks. It is reasonable to assume that Watson knew his impending departure from Baker Street would have an adverse affect on Holmes; indeed, upon the announcement of Watson's engagement, Holmes' response had been to reach towards his cocaine. It is entirely probable, then, that Watson feared his marriage and his resulting departure from Baker Street might somehow result in Holmes' decline, something which Watson undoubtedly bore with a heavy, and guilt-ridden, heart.

Even if we choose to ignore Baring-Gould's chronology and set the case sometime during Watson's marriage, the theory holds, for it is quite likely that Watson, estranged from Mary, knew that Holmes was a cause of tension in his marriage. What better way to relieve this tension then to introduce Holmes to a female companion? We see here, too, the potential for Mary Watson's hand in the matter, for it is entirely probable that it was she who first set this plan in motion. In fact, Watson's conditions for returning home might have been contingent on his cooperation.

Despite Watson's efforts, Holmes' interest remains entirely professional. He compares Miss Hunter, on several occasions, to a sister, muttering that *no sister of his should ever have accepted such a situation*. In fact, it is entirely possible that Holmes was aware of Watson's involvement, and hoped, through subtle means, to dismiss Watson's plot without the need for confrontation.

Holmes does not, however, bear any grudge for Watson's potential involvement. Indeed, upon receiving a telegram from Miss Hunter requesting their presence in Hamp-

shire, Holmes' first act is to request Watson's involvement.

"Will you come with me?" asked Holmes, glancing up.

This is a particularly curious statement, especially when one considers that Holmes is very likely aware of Miss Hunter's interest and, possibly, Watson's involvement. That he should want Watson by his side --as an intermediary, no doubt-- suggests that Holmes is quite desperate to avoid Miss Hunter's advances. One can easily imagine the awkwardness Holmes must have felt, knowing that his interest extended only towards the problem Miss Hunter presented, while Miss Hunter undoubtedly hoped for something more.

Watson, of course, agrees, and yet we see he has not given up hope. Indeed, with his wedding fast approaching, Watson is only too eager to see a connection form between Holmes and Miss Violent. This is quite evident, even when we remove the hypothesis of Watson's involvement; were Miss Hunter a complete stranger, it is unlikely that Watson, a self professed 'lady's man', should have missed her interest in Holmes, and, upon spotting it, Watson would have been only too eager to see Holmes happily married. Perhaps, in Watson's mind, he foresaw a future in which Holmes and he lived side by side, their wives great friends, and the two of them free to travel the world on various adventures, while their wives took solace in one another's company. Truly Watson was capable of some rather grand delusions.

Returning to more serious matters, and Holmes and Watson's journey to Hampshire, one immediately notes Watson's attempts to steer the conversation away from the logical, and onto the romantic, possibly in an attempt to woo Holmes in Violet's place.

It was an ideal spring day, a light blue sky, flecked with little fleecy white clouds drifting across from west to east. The sun was shining very brightly, and yet there was an exhilarating nip in the air, which set an edge to a man's energy. All over the countryside, away to the rolling hills around Aldershot, the little red and grey roofs of the farm-steading peeped out from amid the light green of the new foliage.

"Are they not fresh and beautiful?" I cried with all the enthusiasm of a man fresh from the fogs of Baker Street.

One wonders, upon reading Watson's curious outburst, whether he truly speaks of the farmsteads, or whether he alludes to Miss Hunter, hoping, one cannot doubt, to once again turn Holmes' thoughts to the woman awaiting their arrival.

This effort on Watson's behalf borders on obsessive, and while we have speculated

upon Watson's reasons for wanting Holmes' interest to extend beyond the case, it is Watson's disappointment that is truly of interest. We have quoted the passage above, and yet, it is worth repeating:

As to Miss Violet Hunter, my friend Holmes, rather to my disappointment, manifested no further interest in her when once she had ceased to be the centre of one of his problems, and she is now the head of a private school at Walsall, where I believe that she has met with considerable success.

It is curious here to note that Watson is familiar with Miss Hunter's current appointment. Were she an ordinary client, with no real connection to either man, it is unlikely that Watson would have known of her whereabouts (let alone her successes). That he is familiar with her current situation implies that Watson has somehow kept in touch with Miss Hunter. Is it too far a stretch, then, to assume that Miss Hunter was an acquaintance of Mary Morstan, and that it was she who first persuaded Miss Hunter to share her strange tale with Watson? Was it also Mary Morstan who insisted that Watson arrange to introduce Miss Hunter to Holmes? Watson very likely knew that the case was trivial at best, and yet, it is quite probable that he hoped Holmes might find himself drawn to a woman with so many shared characteristics. Who else, then, but Mary Morstan, might have been in a position to point out these shared characteristics?

The presents us with a new problem, for if, as we are hypothesizing here, it was indeed Mary Morstan who perpetuated this introduction, then one must question why she was so insistent that Holmes should meet a female companion. Woman's intuition being it what it is, it is highly unlikely that Mary could have spent any amount of time in Watson's company without coming to realize the full extent of his feelings for Sherlock Holmes.

That Watson would agree to stage an introduction is unsurprising, for one can easily imagine that he did so in hopes of seeing Holmes happy and secure. Mary knew well what she was doing, for Watson's guilt and worry would ensure Watson's cooperation, and should they succeed, Mary would no longer need fear Holmes' dependency on Watson.

These are very deep waters, indeed.

The Boscombe Valley Mystery

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates The Boscombe Valley Mystery in June of 1889. Watson does not give us a year, but does offer the same month. Watson is also married in this adventure, implying that the case took place sometime during his marriage to Miss Morstan. The story was first published in 1891.

Synopsis:

A young woman by the name of Miss Turner seeks Sherlock Holmes' aid in proving the innocence of her oldest and dearest childhood friend; one James McCarthy. James has been accused of murdering his father, Charles McCarthy, and the evidence against him is overwhelming. Armed with only a footprint, an envelope of cigar ash, and a misplaced rock, Holmes is soon able to solve the case, winning young McCarthy his freedom.

The Subtext:

It should first be noted that, according to Baring-Gould, Watson and Mary married on May 1, 1889, approximately one month before The Boscombe Valley Mystery took place. This is significant, for the events which transpire during this case, and, indeed, so shortly into Watson's newly-wedded bliss, are quite suggestive.

The story begins as Watson and Mary are seated for breakfast. This scene of domestic contentment, along with their morning meal soon, is interrupted by the arrival of a telegram. This telegram is, of course, from Sherlock Holmes, and runs as follows:

Have you a couple of days to spare? Have just been wired for from the west of England in connection with Boscombe Valley tragedy. Shall be glad if you will come with me. Air and scenery perfect. Leave Paddington by the 11:15.

While Holmes' presumption here is quite obvious, allow us to first translate this passage from the subtextual to the textual.

Dearest Watson. I would be ever so glad if you were to ditch your bride of a month and run away with me to the country. The air and scenery are quite lovely, and I have arranged a mystery which might serve to attract your attention for a few days. I have already booked your ticket, and have arranged for us to share a room, just like old times. Kindly be at Pad-

dington by 11:05.

Note that Holmes does not request Watson's presence. The phrase *leave Paddington by the 11:15* suggests that Holmes considers Watson's acceptance inevitable; Holmes is simply telling Watson where to be and when. The question contained within Holmes' telegram, then, can be seen as mere decorum.

Watson, unwilling to seem too eager in front of Mary, appears to weigh the matter quite carefully. It is interesting, then, to note Mary's comment:

"You have been looking a little pale lately. I think that the change would do you good, and you are always so interested in Mr. Sherlock Holmes's cases."

Let us begin with Mary's comment that Watson is looking a little pale. Recall that Watson has now been married some 36 days (using Baring-Gould's date). Thirty-six days, and Watson already begins to show a decline in his appearance; so much so that his wife recognizes this depletion and recommends returning to his companion's side. It is quite obvious here that Watson is not cut out for marriage, and, in fact, that he should have remained in Baker Street.

It is also quite interesting to note Mary's comment that a change would do Watson some good, and that that change should involve Sherlock Holmes. Clearly Mary knows far more than she lets on, for it is obvious here that Mary is only too aware that Watson's failing health is directly tied to Holmes' absence. Apparently Mary felt the best way to aid her husband in his recovery was to send him out of town with his intimate friend and companion. One cannot help but wonder, then, if this was the reason Mary so often allowed Watson to abandon home and practice at Holmes' beckoning. Could she have known that any protest on her part might have resulted in Watson's ill health?

Watson, of course, agrees instantly, and within half an hour was *in a cab with my valise, rattling away to Paddington Station*. Quite amazing for a man with a *fairly long list at present*. Obviously Watson's initial objection was entirely for Mary's benefit.

Watson arrives at Paddington some moments later, only to find Holmes *pacing up and down the platform, his tall, gaunt figure made even gaunter and taller by his long gray travelling-cloak and close-fitting cloth cap*.

Curious, is it not, that Holmes should be pacing? Holmes has requested Watson's presence, and has not heard a reply. For all Holmes knows, Watson has decided not to come, and yet, there he is, pacing frantically, awaiting Watson's arrival. Although we have stated above that Holmes thought Watson's acceptance inevitable, it is clear here

that Holmes was not quite as certain as his telegram made him seem. Indeed, Holmes seems quite nervous and, indeed, worried that Watson might not come.

In fact, Holmes is so relieved to discover that Watson has decided to come that immediately upon spotting Watson, Holmes states:

"It is really very good of you to come, Watson," said he. "It makes a considerable difference to me, having someone with me on whom I can thoroughly rely."

One gets the impression here that Holmes really isn't doing too well without his Watson. He seems considerably flustered, and one can easily imagine that that has much to do with Watson's absence. That Holmes should forget himself long enough to confess his gratefulness at Watson's presence is quite remarkable. That he should go a step further and bestow such a compliment speaks to Holmes' frazzled nerves and increasing loneliness. Truly, Holmes is incomplete without his Watson.

Holmes quickly recoups, Watson's presence a steadying one, and soon the pair set out for Boscombe Valley. To pass the time on their journey, Holmes fills Watson in on the case, making particular note to dismiss Lestrade's theories in the matter. Watson, however, is inclined to accept Lestrade's version of events, and this leads Holmes to displaying his aptitude for deduction. This demonstration, the reader will soon see, leads to a particularly interesting conversation.

To take the first example to hand, I very clearly perceive that in your bedroom the window is upon the right-hand side, and yet I question whether Mr. Lestrade would have noted even so self-evident a thing as that."

"How on earth -- "

"My dear fellow, I know you well. I know the military neatness which characterizes you. You shave every morning, and in this season you shave by the sunlight; but since your shaving is less and less complete as we get farther back on the left side, until it becomes positively slovenly as we get round the angle of the jaw, it is surely very clear that that side is less illuminated than the other. I could not imagine a man of your habits looking at himself in an equal light and being satisfied with such a result."

While I am tempted to merely remark upon the intimacy of this statement and let that stand, instead I shall endeavour to point out this intimacy. Note Holmes' statement that he knows Watson well; well enough to know his shaving habits. That Holmes can deduce the location of Watson's window by his intimate knowledge of Watson's shaving habits is quite remarkable. Holmes does not merely know when and where Watson shaves, he knows when and where Watson shaves depending on the season. This could

not occur if Holmes did not, on a frequent basis, observe Watson shaving.

We know that Watson shaves in his bedroom (as evident by Holmes' comment). We know, too, that Watson's shaving habits vary depending on the season. It can therefore be stated, with almost certainty, that Holmes must have been witness to Watson's shaving rituals on more than one occasion, and during more than one season. We know that, as stated elsewhere in Canon, Holmes wakes after Watson. We know, too, that Watson, being a true Victorian gentleman, would not think of leaving his bedroom in the morning without shaving. Knowing all of this, then, we are really only left with one question:

How often did Holmes wake in Watson's bed so that he might have the occasion to witness Watson's morning shaving ritual?

It is curious here, too, that Holmes should bring up such a delicate subject, especially given that Watson is married; not to mention the fact that he is abandoning his wife to follow Holmes into the country.

The intimacy between them only grows, with Holmes, having exhausted his theories on the case, announces:

And now here is my pocket Petrarch, and not another word shall I say of this case until we are on the scene of action.

Petrarch, as the reader may recall, was an Italian scholar and poet in the 14th century. He is known for his contribution to the Renaissance movement, and, more amusingly, his obsession with a woman named Laura. His love was an unrequited love, and Petrarch channelled his feelings into a series of love poems. Sherlockian scholars have suggested that Holmes' reference to Petrarch is proof of his undying love for Irene Adler --a theory which perplexes your author, for it makes little sense. What would make sense is the assumption that Holmes' reference to Petrarch, particularly as it is made in Watson's presence, speaks to Holmes feelings for Watson. Even dismissing this theory allows for intimacy, however, for it is certainly suggestive that Holmes would pass the time reading love poems in Watson's presence.

This fact becomes increasingly amusing when, upon arriving at their destination, and meeting with Inspector Lestrade, they *drove to the Hereford Arms where a room had already been engaged for us.*

Note that Watson is very particular to clarify that they were given *a* room. This is highly suggestive, for it implies that Holmes and Watson would be sharing accommodations. Were this not the case, then Watson would have undoubtedly stated *rooms*.

Again we are met with Holmes' presumptuousness, for clearly he has made arrangements ahead of time, and clearly, knowing (even hoping) Watson would come, Holmes intentionally booked a single room.

The case progresses to a short interview with Miss Turner, the accused's friend and Holmes' client. Shortly after her leaving, Holmes decides to head out to the gaol to see Mr. McCarthy. Lestrade is adamant that only Holmes will be permitted entrance, leaving Holmes to abandon Watson for several hours. Holmes is, however, good enough to assure Watson of his eminent return.

"Watson, I fear that you will find it very slow, but I shall only be away a couple of hours."

While this is quite sweet of Holmes, and indeed, quite amusing for the reader, it is Watson's response that is of particular note.

I walked down to the station with them, and then wandered through the streets of the little town, finally returning to the hotel, where I lay upon the sofa and tried to interest myself in a yellow-backed novel.

First Watson walks Holmes to the station, a clear indication that Watson is loath to leave Holmes' company. Then, bored, and uncertain how best to pass the time, Watson returns to his and Holmes' hotel room where he reads a *yellow-backed novel*. It is interesting here to note that yellow-backed novels were popular fiction of the day, and included the genre of romance. One can easily imagine, especially upon reading Watson's comment that the plot was *puny* and *thin*, that Watson had mistakenly borrowed one of Mary's romance novels. One wonders, then, if, upon Holmes' return, Watson began to fully understand the implications behind Holmes' invitation, and, more importantly, Watson's acceptance.

Watson is not able to get into his novel, however, and so finds himself contemplating the case. He is unable to reconcile Holmes' position with the evidence at hand, James McCarthy's guilt so obvious that Watson cannot find a way around it. Still, Watson tells us:

...I had so much faith in Sherlock Holmes's insight that I could not lose hope as long as every fresh fact seemed to strengthen his conviction of young McCarthy's innocence.

Watson knows his Holmes well, and, indeed, puts his faith in the right man, for Holmes is able, in short order, to unravel the whole mystery and win McCarthy his freedom. It is interesting here, however, to note the conviction in Watson's words. He does not think to doubt Holmes, even when the weight of evidence stands against

Holmes' theory. Watson is so completely trusting, so completely faithful, that Holmes' theory automatically becomes the correct one in Watson's mind. Truly, Watson is blinded by his dedication to his long-time friend and companion. One cannot help but wonder if Watson afforded this same blind-devotion to his wife.

Watson's thoughts are interrupted by Holmes' return, and the two quickly discuss the results of Holmes' late night visit to young McCarthy. Soon the topic is exhausted, and Holmes, wishing to block out the case until morning, suggests:

"And now let us talk about George Meredith, if you please, and we shall leave all minor matters until to-morrow."

Curious, is it not, that this is the second occasion upon the same day which Holmes has spoken of poets. Curious, too, is it not, that Holmes request they pass the evening locked inside their single hotel room while discussing a well known English poet, and, in all likelihood, his poetry. It would appear as though Holmes has added some tactics to his wooing repertoire.

The next morning leads Holmes and Watson to the site of the crime. This is of particular interest, for it gives us a chance to see Holmes in action, and, more importantly, to witness Holmes' action through Watson's eyes.

Sherlock Holmes was transformed when he was hot upon such a scent as this. Men who had only known the quiet thinker and logician of Baker Street would have failed to recognize him. His face flushed and darkened. His brows were drawn into two hard black lines, while his eyes shone out from beneath them with a steely glitter. His face was bent downward, his shoulders bowed, his lips compressed, and the veins stood out like whipcord in his long, sinewy neck. His nostrils seemed to dilate with a purely animal lust for the chase, and his mind was so absolutely concentrated upon the matter before him that a question or remark fell unheeded upon his ears, or, at the most, only provoked a quick, impatient snarl in reply.

This is an incredibly vivid, incredibly detailed description of Holmes. Indeed, Watson's descriptions are quite suggestive. He speaks of Holmes' *flushed and darkened* face. He mentions that his eyes were shining *with a steely glitter*, and references his *long, sinewy neck*. Then there is Watson's *animal lust* analogy, complete with the image of a snarling Holmes. In fact, one wonders whether Watson was describing the investigation of the scene, or their sex life. Either way, the entire passage speaks, not only to the intimacy between the men, but to Watson's continuing obsession with Holmes.

It does not take Holmes long to get on the right scent, and he is soon able to deduce

the correct solution. There are still details to be worked out, however, and, upon arriving back at their hotel, Holmes feels the need to discuss his findings.

“Look here, Watson,” he said when the cloth was cleared “just sit down in this chair and let me preach to you for a little. I don’t know quite what to do, and I should value your advice. Light a cigar and let me expound.”

We have already discussed Holmes’ need to talk in Watson’s presence, and here we are presented with a perfect example of exactly that. Watson is Holmes’ sounding board. Watson, by his very presence, inspires Holmes’ thoughts. Holmes likes to discuss his day in Watson’s presence, and this is highly suggestive of Holmes’ dependency on Watson. It is curious to note, too, that, for the average person, this role would have belonged to a spouse.

Here Watson fills that role, and he does so admirably well, for within moments of this conversation Holmes’ direction is clear and he is able to solve the case. This, sadly, brings us to the end of our tale, and yet, before concluding, we should make particular note of Watson’s closing remarks.

James McCarthy was acquitted at the Assizes on the strength of a number of objections which had been drawn out by Holmes and submitted to the defending counsel. Old Turner lived for seven months after our interview, but he is now dead; and there is every prospect that the son and daughter may come to live happily together in ignorance of the black cloud which rests upon their past.

Here Watson speaks of Holmes in present tense, and yet, given that the story was published in October of 1891, several months after Holmes’ death, one cannot help but note Watson’s error. Without delving into conspiracy theories, one might suggest that Watson was so overcome with grief and loss that for months after Holmes’ death Watson refused to acknowledge his passing. Then again, one could simply state that Watson wrote the story prior to Holmes’ death, and published it after. Still, if the latter were true, one would expect a man of Watson’s habits to alter the final pages of the story to reflect Holmes’ passing.

Whatever his reasons, it is clear that Watson’s world revolved around Holmes, and with Holmes gone, Watson turned to his imagination; the one place where Holmes still exercised his great powers.

The Stockbroker's Clerk

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk* in June of 1889, setting the case several days after *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*. Watson does date the case in June, but his interaction with Holmes suggests that the two have not seen each other for some time. This implies that Baring-Gould's date for *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* is inaccurate. Watson also tells us that he bought a practice shortly after his marriage, and that he has owned this practice for some three months. This suggests that Baring-Gould's date for Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan is also questionable. Holmes, upon first arriving at Watson's home, asks after Mary, an indication that Holmes has not seen Watson since Watson's marriage. If we do indeed date *The Stockbroker's Clerk* in June of 1889, then we must also date Watson's marriage to Mary Morstan in March/April of the same year. As Watson dates *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* in June, but does not give a year, then we must assume that this mystery took place in 1890, as Holmes disappeared in the following year and Mary had passed prior to his return). The story was first published in 1893.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes, much to Watson's surprise and delight, shows up on Watson's doorstep one day in June. He brings with him a client by the name of Hall Pycroft, and a story so unique that Watson does not hesitate in setting aside his practice to accompany Holmes to Birmingham. On the train to Birmingham, Pycroft's story begins to unfold, and, while Holmes is able to deduce the correct solution, the self inflicted near death of their suspect will prove too singular for even Holmes to reason. All is made clear in the end, however, and Pycroft, much chagrined at having allowed a pair of thieves to so quickly steal his identity, finally has an answer to the curious circumstances regarding his job at the Franco-Midland Hardware Company, Limited.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk is an unusual case in that it begins, not in Baker Street, but rather, with Holmes visiting Watson's residence. We see in their interaction that some time has passed since their last meeting and yet, despite this, there is

a decided sense of warmth in their meeting.

“Ah, my dear Watson,” said he, striding into the room, “I am very delighted to see you! I trust that Mrs. Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of the Sign of Four.”

“Thank you, we are both very well,” said I, shaking him warmly by the hand.

Note that Holmes is very particular to mention that he is *delighted* to see Watson. This is particularly unusual coming from Holmes (as is Holmes’ visit) for Holmes has never been one for verbal displays of affection. Note, too, Holmes’ excitement at seeing Watson. This is evident in Watson’s use of an exclamation point, for it is unlikely that Watson would have changed Holmes’ tone for the purpose of bettering a story (especially knowing that Holmes would undoubtedly read said story). It is obvious, then, that Watson wished to demonstrate that Holmes was quite pleased to see Watson, and, indeed, that Holmes had intentionally sought Watson out, not for a mere case, but because Holmes had missed his Watson.

If we examine this particular scene in terms of Baring-Gould’s chronology, then it is quite unusual, as this case fell on the heels of *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, and Holmes would have only just seen Watson. If this is the case, then it is obvious that Holmes cannot pass any amount of time (even a few days) without seeing his long-time friend and companion.

If we assume that it has been several months since their last meeting, then Holmes’ eagerness becomes quite understandable. In fact, one can easily imagine that Holmes spent the better part of those three months fighting against the urge to see Watson. That Holmes should eventually cave is a testament to his feelings where Watson is concerned.

Holmes’ feelings are not one sided, however, and we must also note Watson’s pleasant surprise at Holmes’ visit. That Watson might forget himself long enough to reach out and take Holmes *warmly by the hand* is an indication of just how much Watson missed his Holmes.

There is, however, some uncertainty in their interaction, and we see in particular Holmes’ worry and concern. Indeed, shortly after arriving at Watson’s residence, Holmes inquires as to whether or not Watson still finds himself interesting in Holmes’ deductive problems. It is obvious here that Holmes is very much eager for Watson to reclaim his role as Holmes’ partner, and yet, that Holmes should need to ask is very indicative of Holmes’ uncertainty regarding his new role in Watson’s married life.

Watson, however, does not disappointment, and within the span of a sentence is able to convince Holmes that nothing has changed, despite the change in Watson's married status.

"On the contrary," I answered, "it was only last night that I was looking over my old notes, and classifying some of our past results."

Aside from relieving Holmes of his worry, this sentence is also quite interesting in that Watson admits to spending his nights glancing over his old case notes. Interesting, is it not, that Watson should spend his evenings (particularly as a newlywed man) poring over the old adventures he had with Sherlock Holmes. While this is quite suggestive on its own, it becomes even more so when one considers this statement in conjuncture with Baring-Gould's chronology. According to Baring-Gould, at best it has been a week since Watson last saw Holmes, implying that Watson is incapable of spending time apart from Holmes without his thoughts turning to the Great Detective. If we assume a greater span of time between Holmes and Watson's last meeting, then it is quite easy to imagine that it was the strain of Holmes' absence which first sent Watson searching through his notes.

Holmes is, of course, quite pleased (and, indeed, relieved) by Watson's response; so much so that Holmes immediately questions whether Watson might be interested in obtaining additional notes for his collection. Watson's response, one must agree, is again quite suggestive.

"Not at all. I should wish nothing better than to have some more of such experiences."

Recall that Watson is newly married, and in the process of establishing a practice. That he should like nothing better than to accompany Holmes on one of his cases is quite telling. In fact, the directness of his statement leaves us with only one conclusion:

Oh la la, Watson.

Again, Holmes is quite pleased by this, and presses Watson in order to ensure that Watson is still willing to drop everything for Holmes. Watson's response and, indeed, Holmes' interrogation is quite telling, not to mention amusing.

"To-day, for example?"

Yes, to-day, if you like."

"And as far off as Birmingham?"

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"And the practice?"

"I do my neighbour's when he goes. He is always ready to work off the debt."

"Ha! nothing could be better," said Holmes, leaning back in his chair and looking keenly at me from under his half-closed lids.

We will begin with Holmes' interrogation. Note that Holmes does not come right out and ask Watson for his assistance. It is quite clear that this is exactly what Holmes is looking for, yet Holmes is not willing to ask until he is certain that Watson is still willing to give over the whole of his time and energy. If indeed this is the first case to follow Watson's marriage, then this tentativeness and probing on Holmes' behalf can be seen as Holmes' attempt to re-establish his footing. He is uncertain what to expect, and so attacks the problem as if it were a case; by asking questions until the pieces finally come together and Holmes is able to deduce the correct solution.

One doubts, however, that Watson was aware of what Holmes was doing, for Holmes is very deft in his manipulation of Watson. He takes particular care not to appear demanding or needy, and establishes Watson's willingness before outright asking.

Watson is, of course, only too eager to agree, and this is particularly interesting given that Watson has just told us that he has only recently acquired his practice, and that this practice was quite demanding of his time. That Watson, despite this, should be more than willing to rush off with Holmes at the first available opportunity is quite remarkable, especially when one considers that he is also leaving behind his new wife.

We see here, too, Holmes' delight at Watson's agreement. In fact, Holmes is so thrilled to once again have Watson by his side that he lets out a great laugh and confesses that *nothing could be better*. Truly, this must be the case, for it is quite obvious that Holmes has gone to some effort in order to ensure Watson's involvement. Clearly, as we have mentioned before, Holmes misses his Watson, and clearly, this sentiment is very much reciprocated.

Having secured Watson's involvement in the case, Holmes feels quite comfortable turning the conversation to a familiar game; Holmes deducing to Watson's amazement. This provides for a very interesting scene, for we are given a glimpse at Holmes' insecurity, and shown how this insecurity relates to Watson.

Like all Holmes's reasoning the thing seemed simplicity itself when it was once explained. He read the thought upon my features, and his smile had a tinge of bitterness.

"I am afraid that I rather give myself away when I explain." said he. "Results without causes are much more impressive.

Interesting, is it not, that Holmes should express such bitterness at Watson's under-

standing. Holmes enjoys amazing Watson. He likes that Watson regards him as a puzzle. We cannot doubt, then, that Holmes would worry over losing his air of mystery. To Holmes, allowing this sense of mystery to become commonplace would result in losing Watson's interest, and we can well imagine that this was something Holmes dreaded, for it would mean losing Watson entirely.

In fact, we can take this a step further and suggest that Holmes' behaviour throughout this case is suggestive of Holmes' suspicion that this might have already occurred. Indeed, in Holmes' mind, Watson's decision to marry might very well be seen as an indication of Watson's declining interest. We know that Holmes is uninterested by simplicity and the commonplace, and so one can easily imagine that Holmes would assume Watson should feel the same. If this is the case, then Watson's reaction to Holmes' explanation likely solidified Holmes' suspicion that Watson considered Holmes commonplace, and, as such, that Watson's interest had waned. If we assume this theory to be the correct one, then Holmes' bitterness is quite understandable.

As is Holmes' sudden demand that they leave for Birmingham at once, for Holmes is very quick to remind Watson that he has already agreed to aid Holmes on the case, and that time is of the essence. Watson agrees *in an instant*, and we can well imagine that this pleased Holmes considerably, for despite having abandoned Holmes for a wife, Watson is not yet a lost cause, and may yet be wooed back to Holmes' side.

The story shifts here, and Holmes and Watson fade into the background as the case comes to the forefront. While this may seem disappointing to the student of subtext, rest assured that the case provides what is possibly the most poignant piece of subtext in the whole of the story.

Despite Holmes' insistence that Watson aid him on this case, it is interesting to note that, aside from reading aloud from a newspaper, and reviving a dying man, Watson does nothing to contribute to the case. In fact, Holmes does very little himself; the bulk of the story explained by a third party. One must then ask: Why was it so important for Holmes to retain Watson's aid?

Ignoring what we have touched on so far, several additional theories come to mind.

It is entirely possible, and, indeed, quite probable, that Holmes simply missed Watson. Perhaps this was the first case to come Holmes' way since Watson's marriage, and, as such, Holmes used it as an excuse to see his old friend. Perhaps Holmes chose to allow Watson time to adjust to his new life as a married practitioner and that this case

came at the conclusion of Holmes' self imposed distancing. Or perhaps Holmes had waited for Watson to make the first move, only to realize that Watson was preoccupied and Holmes, losing his patience, finally gave in and sought out Watson in his home. Regardless of the details, it is quite obvious that Holmes longed for Watson's company and companionship.

While less probable, and entirely more cynical, it is possible that Holmes wished to interfere with Watson's marriage. Perhaps in dragging Watson off on cases, even those which did not require Watson's presence, Holmes hoped that he might open a chasm between the young couple. We have demonstrated elsewhere (namely in our analysis of SIGN) Holmes' jealousy regarding Mary, and, indeed, the upset Watson's marriage caused. We have seen, too, Holmes' manipulative nature, especially where Watson is concerned. Is it not possible, then, that Holmes intentionally set about destroying Watson's marriage, all in an effort to have Watson return to his rightful place at Holmes' side?

Whatever the reason, it is quite clear that Holmes is incapable of functioning without his Watson. It is quite clear, too, that Watson is unable to replace Holmes, despite his many efforts to do exactly that.

Clearly, the intertwining of their lives was destined.

The Naval Treaty

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Naval Treaty* in July/August of 1889. As Watson tells us that the case takes place in the July immediately following his marriage, we can assume that Baring-Gould's date is correct. The story was first published in 1893.

Synopsis:

Percy Phelps, an old schoolmate of Watson's, has recently experienced a most nerve-racking series of events, the result of which could lead to scandal, and, indeed, personal disgrace. While working late one night, Percy Phelps had the misfortune to lose a top secret naval treaty, as it was stolen from his desk. He had been working on copying the treaty when, upon leaving the room for an instant, Phelps was horrified to return and find the treaty gone. A bout of brain fever immediately followed this tragedy, leaving Phelps out of commission for some two months. Having only just recovered, Phelps' first thought is to contact his old friend Watson to see if Watson might endeavour to bring Sherlock Holmes around to look into the case. Watson is only too eager to help, as is Sherlock Holmes (who does so love his art), and so, upon discovering that the whole of the case rests upon a rung bell cord, Sherlock Holmes sets to work. It is not long before he is able to deduce the whereabouts of the document, which he then retrieves and returns to Percy Phelps, though not without some dramatic license.

The Subtext:

The July which immediately succeeded my marriage was made memorable by three cases of interest, in which I had the privilege of being associated with Sherlock Holmes and of studying his methods.

The Adventure of the Naval Treaty begins on a rather interesting note. Here, Watson tells us that it is the July following his marriage, and that said month contained three cases of interest. Watson goes on to list the cases, and we note that none appear in Baring-Gould's chronology between Watson's marriage and the dating of *The Naval Treaty*. Baring-Gould sets only two cases between Watson's marriage to Miss Morstan and this case, and so, it is safe to assume that Watson has been involved in at least five

cases since marrying Mary. If we consider that Watson has been married some three months (using Baring-Gould's date), then this averages out to some 1.67 cases per month. Odd, is it not, for a newlywed man to spend so much time away from his new bride. When one examines Mary's role in Canon, one cannot help but think that it was she, rather than Mrs. Hudson, who was entitled to the claim of *most long-suffering of women*.

Having set the stage, Watson then goes on to introduce his childhood friend, Percy Phelps.

During my school-days I had been intimately associated with a lad named Percy Phelps, who was of much the same age as myself, though he was two classes ahead of me. He was a very brilliant boy, and carried away every prize which the school had to offer, finished his exploits by winning a scholarship which sent him on to continue his triumphant career at Cambridge.

It is quite unusual that Watson should refer to his childhood school chum as someone he was intimately acquainted with, and yet, as Watson continues his introduction, we begin to see a connection. Note that Watson refers to Percy (one of a very select few who can claim Watson's intimate acquaintanceship) as a brilliant boy. This brings to mind another brilliant boy, and we begin to see that Watson has been drawn to intelligence even from an early age. That Watson should find himself attracted to Sherlock Holmes so instantly is no longer a mystery, for it is obvious here that Watson has a type.

Watson's introduction is not without reason, for a moment later he reveals that Percy has sent a letter requesting that Watson engage the services of Sherlock Holmes on Percy's behalf. Watson does exactly this, and tells us:

So moved was I that even had it been a difficult matter I should have tried it, but of course I knew well that Holmes loved his art, so that he was ever as ready to bring his aid as his client could be to receive it.

One wonders if Watson knew that Holmes would have taken the case regardless. As the case holds a personal connection, and this personal connection exists through Watson, Holmes would have been only too eager to accept Watson's request. The case is immaterial; Watson need but ask.

And ask Watson does, Watson rushing off to Baker Street to present Holmes with the case. Upon arriving, however, Watson finds Holmes engaged with an experiment, and settles in to wait. Holmes' statement, upon acknowledging Watson's presence, is

quite interesting.

"I will be at your service in an instant, Watson."

Watson has told us (and indeed, Holmes' actions suggest) that Holmes is in the midst of a case, and yet, Holmes is willing to put all of that aside for Watson's time. Clearly, Watson was, and will always be, Holmes' priority.

In short order, Holmes devotes his attention to Watson, reading carefully the letter Watson has brought. The letter allows for several points of deduction, and while, for the most part, these are expected, there is one small element which is quite suggestive.

"Precisely. It is a woman's."

"A man's surely," I cried.

Holmes has just announced that the writing contained within the letter is not that of Percy Phelps, but rather, that of a woman's. Watson seems quite surprised by this, and one cannot help but wonder why. Could it be that Percy Phelps was Watson's first boyhood experiment? If this is the case, then Watson might very well assume Percy's preferences had remained unchanged and hence anticipated a male. And why should Holmes take such care to point this out? Did he perhaps sense Watson's former connection and wish to sever this tie before agreeing to take the case?

Holmes does eventually agree to take on the case, and soon the pair head out to Woking. There they meet with Percy Phelps and his household. The initial interview does not last long, and yet, one gets the sense that Holmes is only too aware of how weakened Percy's misfortune has left him. It is odd, for Holmes does not exhibit his usual reserved sense of sympathy here. Indeed, he seems quite pleased. In fact, at the end of the interview, Holmes finds himself fingering a rose and giving one of the most singular of monologues in all of Canon.

"What a lovely thing a rose is..."

"There is nothing in which deduction is so necessary as in religion. It can be built up as an exact science by the reasoner. Our highest assurance of the goodness of Providence seems to me to rest in the flowers. All other things, our powers, our desires, our food, are all really necessary for our existence in the first instance. But this rose is an extra. Its smell and its colour are an embellishment of life, not a condition of it. It is only goodness which gives extras, and so I say again that we have much to hope from the flowers."

While Holmes' analysis of the rose is inaccurate (the smell and colour are not extras, and are, in fact, a condition of life, for it is the flower's smell and colour which attracts

insects in order to facilitate pollination) we must look beyond his folly and attempt to interpret Holmes' meaning here. I am sure the reader will agree that Holmes' sudden shift in topic is quite unusual, and yet, there is a very logical explanation for why Holmes might break off mid-case in order to admire a rose and muse on the subject of Providence (aside from the obvious explanation that he was examining the window sill for evidence).

Particular attention, however, should be given to Holmes' allusion to hope. While we do know that Holmes intended to convey hope to Percy Phelps (in response to Percy's inquiry as to the likelihood of retrieving the lost document), it is also reasonable to suggest that Holmes was speaking of hope on a much more personal level. This case proved to be an extra, for Holmes might not have taken it were it not for Watson's involvement, and through this case Holmes has glimmered hope. It is quite probable that Holmes deduced the connection between Percy and Watson, and so it is entirely likely that Holmes intended to weigh Percy quite carefully. Upon discovering a shell of a man, entirely dependent on his finance, one can easily imagine Holmes relief, as Holmes would now know that Watson's affections were without male contest. Holmes still had a wife to contend with, but aside from Mary, Holmes now knew that he need not fear competition. Is it too much to suggest that Holmes' introspective musings came as a result of this new-found knowledge?

Shortly after this scene, Holmes and Watson leave Woking and return, via train, to London. Holmes, excited over the case, immediately begins to theorize, prompting Watson to turn his thoughts to his practice.

"My practice--" I began.

"Oh, if you find your own cases more interesting than mine--" said Holmes with some asperity.

"I was going to say that my practice could get along very well for a day or two, since it is the slackest time in the year."

"Excellent," said he, recovering his good-humour. "Then we'll look into this matter together."

First, allow us to note Watson's statement that his practice could get along very well for a day or two. Recall that this case takes place in July/August of 1889. In June of that same year (as seen in *The Stockbroker's Clerk*) Watson tells us that he has only recently bought a practice and that it was quite demanding of his time. Why, then, should Watson suddenly find himself without a workload? Surely a month makes little

difference.

Note, too, Holmes' assumption that Watson intends to return to his practice. Aside from asperity, there is alarm here too, and we see in Holmes his almost panicked response. This is even more evident when one notes that Holmes recovers his good humour only upon Watson's clarification.

In fact, the moment Holmes is assured of Watson's involvement, his eagerness towards the case returns, and Holmes immediately returns to theorizing. Watson, for the most part, provokes thought by asking for clarification, until, Watson tells us:

He sank back into the state of intense and silent thought from which he had emerged; but it seemed to me, accustomed as I was to his every mood, that some new possibility had dawned suddenly upon him.

The intimacy in this statement is staggering, Watson freely confessing that he knew Holmes' every mood. Only two men intimately acquainted could claim such a thing, and while Watson has, on several occasions, told us exactly that, we see here proof of Watson's words

Their investigation stalls shortly after this point, Holmes and Watson interviewing the inspector (a *foxy* man, according to Watson) to no avail, before Holmes sends Watson home with the request that he accompany Holmes to Woking in the morning. Holmes and Watson eventually return, and shortly after hearing the news that someone has attempted to break into Percy's bedroom, Holmes sends Percy to Baker Street in Watson's protective custody. Note, here, Holmes' parting instructions as Percy and Watson return to London.

"Mr. Phelps can have the spare bedroom to-night, and I will be with you in time for breakfast, for there is a train which will take me into Waterloo at eight."

Recall that, as far as we know, there are two bedrooms in Baker Street; Watson's old room, and Holmes' room. As Watson has recently married and left Baker Street, it is reasonable to assume that Watson's old room has become the spare room, implying that Percy will be sleeping in Watson's old room. If this is the case, then Watson is left with only two options; the couch or Holmes' bed. While Watson does not specifically tell us, Watson's silence can be taken as an answer, for Watson would have undoubtedly told us if he had slept on the settee; whereas, if Watson were to have borrowed Holmes' bed, propriety would have dictated that he not share this scandalous information with his reader. We do know, however, that Watson did spend the night in Baker Street, for he awoke the next morning and *set off at once for Phelps' room.*

Not, of course, before Watson *lay tossing half the night*, and while Watson attempts to convince us that this was the fault of the case, it is quite obvious that Watson's distraction stemmed from Holmes' scent upon the pillows.

Despite this sleepless night, Watson wakes in time for Holmes' return and together, along with Percy Phelps, Holmes and Watson sit down to breakfast. Very quickly into the meal, Holmes is able, though with a bit of mischief, to put the naval treaty in Percy's hands. This concludes the case, and we cannot help but note how pleased Holmes seems. Indeed, he is even more pleased than usual. Is it too much to assume that Holmes, having helped a childhood friend of Watson's, anticipated that this act might earn Watson's further admiration and appreciation? We have seen countless occasions where Holmes has gone out of his way to impress Watson, and here he is presented the perfect opportunity. In helping Phelps, and, indirectly, the country, Holmes has proven to Watson that he is willing to do anything to aid Watson and those close to Watson. Clearly, Holmes knew that Watson would recognize this, and likely hoped that Watson would demonstrate his gratitude by giving Holmes the pleasure of his company.

The Cardboard Box

Dates:

Dating *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* is a challenging task. Watson gives us the month, stating that it was a blazing hot day in August. This has led Baring-Gould to choose August/September of 1889 as his date. The year, however, remains in question, and there are several arguments against Baring-Gould's date. To begin, Watson is clearly living in Baker Street, as Watson refers to the rooms and the blinds under the possessive *our*. In addition to this, no mention of Mary is made, suggesting that Watson was not married. The story does, however, reference SIGN, suggesting that it takes place after Watson's marriage. As the story was published in January 1893, and Holmes disappeared in 1891 (at a time when Watson was still married), this creates a good deal of confusion. It is your author's suggestion that the story takes place in 1890, during a time when Watson and Mary were temporarily separated.

Synopsis:

In what is perhaps the most disturbing story in Canon, Sherlock Holmes finds himself called in on a case which will prove quite gruesome. Miss Susan Cushing, of Croydon, is quite disturbed to receive, via the post, a cardboard box containing two severed human ears, preserved in salt. Scotland Yard assumes some prank, as Miss Cushing has lodged to medical students in the past, but Sherlock Holmes is convinced the ears have a more sinister source. A thorough examination of the box and its contents, along with a visit to Susan's sister, Sarah (whom Holmes believes to be the intended recipient of the box) puts Holmes on the right track, and soon he is able to deduce that the ears belong to Susan's younger sister, Mary, and her extra-marital lover.

The Subtext:

Before we begin, recall that when *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* were published in the States for the first time, they did not include *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box*. The Cardboard Box was considered too scandalous for American audiences, as it dealt with adultery. As a result, the opening of the story was inserted into *The Adventure of the Resident Patient*. As such, we have already analyzed the first part of this story. For simplicity, this has been reproduced below, for additional information see

Decoding the Subtext: The Adventure of the Resident Patient¹².

The case begins, as most cases do, with Holmes and Watson closeted away in Baker Street. It has become a familiar setting, and *The Resident Patient* [Cardboard Box] gives what is perhaps one of the best examples of the domestic life which Holmes and Watson led between cases.

Our blinds were half-drawn, and Holmes lay curled upon the sofa, reading and re-reading a letter which he had received by the morning post.

There is something decidedly comfortable in Holmes' behaviour and, indeed, in the way in which Watson describes him. It is obvious here that the two men have spent a good deal of time in one another's presence, and have reached the point in their relationship where they are comfortable merely enjoying one another's company.

Finding that Holmes was too absorbed for conversation, I had tossed aside the barren paper, and leaning back in my chair, I fell into a brown study.

Here it is interesting to note that, despite the domesticity of the situation, Watson still longs for Holmes' companionship. This is evident in the above reference, as Watson, bored by the weather and lack of activity, and unable to engage in conversation with his friend, falls quickly into a *brown study*. This reference is a mark of how engaging Watson finds Holmes, and how quickly he reverts to a state of depression when Holmes' attention is lacking.

Fortunately for Watson, his study is quickly interrupted, for Holmes, perhaps sensing Watson's need for companionship, quickly turns his attention away from his letter and onto his friend and roommate. He does this in the only way that Holmes knows how; by making a startling deduction.

"You are right, Watson," said he. "It does seem a very preposterous way of settling a dispute."

"Most preposterous!" I exclaimed, and then, suddenly realizing how he had echoed the inmost thought of my soul, I sat up in my chair and stared at him in blank amazement.

Despite Watson's amazement, it should not surprise the reader to discover that Holmes is capable of reading the inmost thoughts of Watson's soul. Holmes knows Watson well, and can read him easily; a sign of just how intimately aware of Watson Holmes has become.

Watson, in traditional Watsonian fashion, immediately confesses his confusion and requests that Holmes explain how he was able to deduce Watson's thoughts.

Holmes' answer is quite suggestive.

"You remember," said he, "that some little time ago, when I read you the passage in one of Poe's sketches, in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thought of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere tour de force of the author. On my remarking that I was constantly in the habit of doing the same thing you expressed incredulity."

I am certain you will agree that there is something decidedly intimate in the act of one man reading anything, let alone Poe, to his male companion.

Watson, again in typical Watsonian fashion, denies this accusation. Holmes' response?

"Perhaps not with your tongue, my dear Watson, but certainly with your eyebrows."

It is quite curious to note that Holmes' observation of Watson is acute enough to not only discern Watson's emotions based solely upon the movement of his eyebrows, but recall the incident some time after it has occurred. Clearly, then, Holmes is in the habit of observing Watson quite closely.

Watson, however, is not convinced. He simply cannot conceive of how Holmes could know his inmost thoughts by a simple shift in his facial features. Holmes, of course, is more than willing to show off his talents, his boastful nature constantly coming to the forefront whenever he is in Watson's presence.

"Your features, and especially your eyes," Holmes clarifies, and again Holmes' demonstrates the close attention he tends to pay Watson.

Holmes' explanation continues as he retraces Watson's thought process. Here, he refers to a past incident with perfect clarity, suggesting that Holmes has stored long-passed conversations with his dear, and intimate, friend. For a man who is very selective in what he stores in his 'brain attic', it is interesting to note that his past interactions with Watson are considered important enough for storage.

The above passage, as mentioned, was taken from the analysis of *The Resident Patient*, which, in American versions, included the opening scene in *The Cardboard Box*. We turn now, then, away from the subtext of this scene and to the dating of this scene, for in finding its place within a chronology the story contains several interesting elements which are relevant to the student of subtext.

We assume Watson's month of August, but in order to determine the year, we must examine several aspects.

First, it is quite obvious that Watson is living in Baker Street, as Watson makes no reference to his wife, or to visiting Holmes. In fact, Watson refers, on several occasions,

to the contents of Baker Street (*our blinds were half-drawn...*) with the possessive *our*. If this is the case, then we can assume Watson is not presently married.

However, the story also references The Sign of the Four:

"The case," said Sherlock Holmes as we chatted over our cigars that night in our rooms at Baker Street, "is one where, as in the investigations which you have chronicled under the names of 'A Study in Scarlet' and of 'The Sign of Four'...

Note here, too, the reference to *our rooms*.

Recall that SIGN was published in February of 1890 and that Baring-Gould dates SIGN in September of 1888. Holmes refers to Watson having chronicled the story, implying that it has been published. If this is the case, then the earliest date for The Cardboard Box is August 1890. If Watson penned the story shortly after it occurred, then the earliest date (given that we are searching for an August) would be August 1889 (Baring-Gould's date).

Recall, too, that Baring-Gould dates The Navel Treaty several weeks before The Cardboard Box, and that in this case Watson was living away from Baker Street and clearly married. It is unlikely, then, that Watson, some three weeks later, should once again find himself living in Baker Street. Some time must have passed, implying that the date of August 1889 is incorrect.

We must then assume that The Cardboard Box took place no earlier than August 1890. However, Watson was still married at this time. The story was published in January of 1893, giving us the following dates:

August 1890

August 1891

August 1892

We can eliminate two of these dates by examining The Final Problem. The Final Problem takes place in April of 1891, meaning that Holmes had vanished over the cliffs of Reichenbach Falls before August of 1891. Holmes did not return until 1894. Watson, in The Final Problem, tells us:

It may be remembered that after my marriage, and my subsequent start in private practice, the very intimate relations which had existed between Holmes and myself became to some extent modified. He still came to me from time to time when he desired a companion in his investigation, but these occasions grew more and more seldom, until I find that in the year 1890 there were only three cases of which I retain any record.

Here we have caught Watson in a lie.

The Cardboard Box did in fact take place in 1890, and was not one of Watson's three. In fact, there were a good deal more than three, for Watson and Mary had separated (likely due to Watson's continual abandonment of Mary for Holmes) and Watson had returned to Baker Street. Watson, of course, could not have allowed this scandalous information to come to light, and so he downplayed his role in Holmes' cases and rearranged several dates so as to maintain the illusion that he and Mary were happily married. In fact, it was not until the spring of 1891, when Holmes, in France on a case, urged Watson to reconcile with Mary (as Holmes, at this point, knew of Professor Moriarty and foresaw his imminent death).

Watson and Mary's relationship, however, was never quite the same, and Watson was only too eager to run off with Holmes in The Final Problem. Whether Watson's return was met with Mary's death or a divorce, we cannot say.

The only remaining question, then, is why Watson felt the need to downplay his role in Holmes' cases. Watson had, on previous occasions, written Mary as a very understanding woman, and so one finds it quite curious that Watson suddenly felt the need to distance himself from Holmes. He could have just as easily feigned a continued happy marriage. Could it be, then, that upon returning to Baker Street Watson reclaimed, not just his place at Holmes' side, but his place in Holmes' bed as well?

With that thought, we will now return to the story.

Shortly after the events described above, Holmes reads to Watson from a letter he received that morning. The letter is from Inspector Lestrade, and requests Holmes' aid on a case. Holmes, unwilling to accept the case without his Watson, asks:

"What say you, Watson? Can you rise superior to the heat and run down to Croydon with me on the off chance of a case for your annals?"

"I was longing for something to do."

It is quite obvious from the opening scene that Holmes has had this note for some time, and yet, it is not until later that Holmes asks Watson to accompany him to Croydon. Recall, too, Watson's earlier boredom, which we can instantly assume Holmes noticed. Could it be, then, that Holmes waited for Watson to exhibit signs of boredom before mentioning the case? Perhaps in hopes that it might better the chance of Watson agreeing? Watson clearly mentions that he was *longing for something to do*, and we must assume that Holmes was able to deduce this. If this is the case, then it is quite remarkable that Holmes would intentionally manipulate the situation in order to ensure Watson's involvement. If your author is correct, and Watson and Mary are indeed

separated, then one can easily imagine that this was the first case to come Holmes' way after Watson's return.

Watson having agreed, the pair soon head out to Croydon, where they meet with Lestrade and begin their investigation. Their first act is to inspect the cardboard box containing two severed human ears. Holmes need only glance at the gruesome relics before announcing that a serious crime has taken place. Watson, upon hearing Holmes' words, tells us:

A vague thrill ran through me as I listened to my companion's words and saw the stern gravity which had hardened his features.

We have assumed above that this is the first case Watson has participated in since his separation from Mary. If this is the case, then this statement takes on new meaning, and provides insight into why Watson and Mary were unable to maintain their relationship. Clearly Watson was not cut out for married life, for it is obvious that he was too consumed by the thrill of the hunt and the tingle of excitement he had come to associate with Sherlock Holmes to devote time and attention to his wife.

Watson is not, of course, the only one excited by their reunion. Holmes, although maintaining a subdued exterior, shows his excitement in his actions, and this is clearly seen a few moments later when, after interviewing Susan Cushing, Holmes and Watson head out, intent on seeing Susan's sister, Sarah Cushing. They take a cab, and Holmes' chivalry here is quite telling.

There was a cab passing as we came out, and Holmes hailed it.

"How far to Wallington?" he asked.

"Only about a mile, sir."

"Very good. Jump in, Watson."

How very gentlemanly of Holmes, that he should step aside and wave Watson into the cab first. It is obvious that Holmes is still quite uncertain as to Watson's intentions, and that he intends, through actions, words and deeds, to woo Watson back on a permanent basis.

The pair are unable to see Sarah Cushing, but news of her sudden brain fever gives Holmes the answer he was seeking. Solution in hand, Holmes' mind then turns to playful thoughts, Holmes announcing:

"Drive us to some decent hotel, cabby, where we may have some lunch, and afterwards we shall drop down upon friend Lestrade at the police-station."

Curious, is it not, that Holmes should wish to dine at some anonymous hotel.

Holmes is usually quite particular concerning where he takes his meals, and yet, here he leaves the decision entirely to the cabby. Is it unreasonable, then, to assume that the reason Holmes was unconcerned with location had more to do with wanting a bed and less to do with wanting a meal? Watson does tell us, after all, that *the afternoon was far advanced and the hot glare had softened into a mellow glow before we found ourselves at the police-station*. Surely even a leisurely meal could not have taken the better part of the afternoon.

Soon after their ‘meal’ the story turns to Jim Browner and his account of the events which led to the murder of his wife and her lover. What is amusing here is that the statement is written, and that Lestrade has sent Holmes a copy. Holmes reads this copy out loud for Watson’s benefit, and one can easily picture the two men sitting astride the fire, cigars in hand, perhaps still clad in their dressing gowns, and flushed from the morning’s activities.

It is curious, too, that the case should revolve around the subject of infidelity and adultery. In fact, the case upsets Holmes a good deal, and one can easily imagine that, despite his happiness at once again having Watson by his side, Holmes felt some measure of self-reproach. The case ends in Holmes’ confusion, and we hear in his words his uncertainty, his doubt, and most of all, his guilt.

“What is the meaning of it, Watson?” said Holmes solemnly as he laid down the paper. “What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever.”

The Engineer's Thumb

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb* in September of 1889. Watson tells us that the story took place in the summer of 1889, and mentions that he is writing the story some two years after the events first took place. As the case was first published in March of 1892, this would imply that the case took place sometime before March of 1890. As September can still be considered a summer month, and September of 1889 is the closest summer month to March of 1890, we have no reason to doubt Baring-Gould's date.

Synopsis:

Doctor Watson, having been woken in the early hours of the morning by the arrival of a patient, finds himself treating a young hydraulic engineer. Mr. Victor Hatherley, weak from loss of blood, has been brought round from Paddington station by another of Watson's patients. Mr. Hatherley reveals, along with the gapping wound where his thumb once was, a most unusual tale regarding a hydraulic press that he was called upon to inspect, and the resulting near brush with death which came at the hands of his clients. Watson, intrigued by this young man's story, remarks that Sherlock Holmes is exactly the man to help, and, upon completing the bandaging of Mr. Hatherley's wound, escorts his patient to Baker Street. There, what is murky and clouded to Watson and his charge is quite clear to Sherlock Holmes, and they soon find themselves on the trail of a gang of counterfeiters.

The Subtext:

While not as subtextually heavy as most of the other cases, *The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb* does present several elements which will prove of interest to the student of subtext. It is telling, however, that in spite of the absence of interaction between Holmes and Watson (and hence the subtext usually found within each case) the story does present several subtextually heavy themes. We will examine each of these in turn.

Of all the problems which have been submitted to my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, for solution during the years of our intimacy, there were only two which I was the means of

introducing to his notice—that of Mr. Hatherley's thumb, and that of Colonel Warburton's madness.

We begin with Watson's language, and here we note Watson's use of the word *intimate*. This is a particularly unusual place for Watson to use this word, and yet, Watson includes it. This begs the question: Why?

It is obvious that Watson, recently married, wished to remind his audience of the bond between him and Holmes. In fact, it is entirely possible that Watson, having married and left Baker Street, worried (needlessly, of course) that his place at Holmes' side might no longer be recognizable. Public recognition was quite important to Watson, for it validated the role he played in Holmes' life. That Watson should still wish the public to associate him with Holmes is not only indicative of Watson's need for notoriety, but of Watson's need for validation. Clearly, public accolade, in Watson's mind, replaced praise Watson might have received from Holmes.

We might also examine this introduction as a means of Watson reaffirming the closeness which once existed between him and Holmes. Recall that Holmes had vanished over Reichenbach Falls in the prior year (1891), and that Watson was still chronicling Holmes' cases. It is quite likely that Watson felt the need to reassure himself that, once, he was Holmes' closest and most intimate companion. It is also quite possible that this need stemmed from Watson's inability to move on from Holmes' death (as evident by the sheer number of stories published after Holmes' death).

I had returned to civil practice and had finally abandoned Holmes in his Baker Street rooms, although I continually visited him and occasionally even persuaded him to forgo his Bohemian habits so far as to come and visit us.

We see a shift in the story here, and yet, we come back a second time to Watson's choice of language. Note that Watson speaks of *abandoning* Holmes in *his* Baker Street rooms. Watson mentions, too, his continual visits, and the effort he expended convincing Holmes to reciprocate these visits. There is quite a bit of guilt in this statement; quite a bit of regret, too. In fact, one can easily imagine that Watson despised having to leave Holmes on his own. It is very likely that Watson, especially during the first few months of his marriage, found an excuse to drop by Holmes' rooms on a daily basis (though whether Holmes was home at the time, we cannot say). We can see, too, Watson's numerous attempts to convince Holmes to come for dinner. Obsessive behaviour, and not indicative of a man newly, and happily, married. That Watson should worry more over Holmes' well being than his newly formed marriage is quite telling.

We turn now to the introduction of the story, and the arrival of a patient. Victor Hatherley is a hydraulic engineer, and is currently missing the whole of his thumb. The mending of this wound is quite gruesome, and yet, upon hearing the man's tale, Watson's reaction is quite unusual.

"Ha!" cried I, "If it is anything in the nature of a problem which you desire to see solved, I should strongly recommend you to come to my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, before you go to the official police."

Note that Watson's first reaction is not that of horror, but rather, that of glee. Odd, is it not, that despite having just repaired a gapping hole in a man's hand, Watson should be so excited by the prospect of seeing his long-time friend and companion that he should let out a great laugh. In fact, Watson is so excited to see Holmes again that he offers to rush over to Baker Street that very moment and arrange an introduction.

"I'll do better. I'll take you round to him myself."

We know, having witnessed Watson doctor to Holmes on numerous occasions, that Watson is not an incompetent physician. We know, too, that Watson tends to put the welfare of his patients above everything else. Does it not seem strange, then, that Watson should disregard the weakness of a man who has obviously lost a considerable amount of blood? Mr. Hatherley was in no shape to traipse across town and call upon Sherlock Holmes, and yet, Watson practically dragged him from the room.

Recall, too, that Watson has told us it is early morning. We can infer, based on the arrival of a patient, that Watson's surgery would then be open for the day, and yet, Watson throws aside the whole of his practice in order to rush over to Baker Street. Incredible.

"We'll call a cab and go together. We shall just be in time to have a little breakfast with him. Do you feel equal to it?"

Watson's desire to see Holmes escalates, for in addition to jeopardizing Mr. Hatherley's health and abandoning his practice, Watson is now abandoning Mary in favour of breakfasting with Holmes. In fact, the mere mention of breakfast is ample evidence that it is Holmes, and not the case, which holds Watson's attention. If it were the case which held Watson's interest, he would not have mentioned breakfast. Clearly, then, we can safely state that Watson has been looking for an excuse to see Holmes. Mr. Hatherley's missing thumb could not have presented a better opportunity.

Sherlock Holmes was, as I expected, lounging about his sitting-room in his dressing-gown, reading the agony column of The Times and smoking his before-breakfast pipe, which was

composed of all the plugs and dottles left from his smokes of the day before, all carefully dried and collected on the corner of the mantelpiece. He received us in his quietly genial fashion, ordered fresh rashers and eggs, and joined us in a hearty meal.

Watson's arrival in Baker Street is also quite noteworthy. Note here Watson's statement that he expected to find Holmes in his dressing gown. Aside from speaking to the familiarity between the two men (and, indeed, the intimacy), this statement is also quite amusing, for one begins to wonder if perhaps it was not merely the thought of breakfast which had Watson rushing to Baker Street so early in the morning.

Holmes' reaction is quite telling, too, for he seems quite pleased to discover Watson upon his doorstep. His manner is quite chivalrous, and one gets the impression that Holmes is going out of his way to make Watson feel welcome. In fact, one can easily imagine that only Watson would warrant the serving of a large weekday breakfast.

Holmes sat in his big armchair with the weary, heavy-lidded expression which veiled his keen and eager nature, while I sat opposite to him, and we listened in silence to the strange story which our visitor detailed to us.

Having finished breakfast, the trio are now seated around the fireplace, the scene a familiar one. It is interesting to note that, despite Watson's marriage and abandonment of Baker Street, he is still quite welcome around Holmes' fire. In fact, the entire scene is quite habitual, and it is delightful to note that, Watson's marriage aside, Holmes will forever reserve Watson's chair.

The story soon shifts as we hear the strange tale of the hydraulic engineer, Mr. Hatherley, and then follow Holmes on his quest to find Hatherley's strange house in the country outside of Reading. Their pursuit comes too late, however, for, while they do discover the house, their criminals have vanished, along with all proof of their crime. Holmes, oddly enough, is not perturbed. In fact, with Mr. Hatherley's expression of disappointment, Holmes reminds Hatherley that the event can at least be considered experience.

"Experience," said Holmes, laughing. "Indirectly it may be of value, you know; you have only to put it into words to gain the reputation of being excellent company for the remainder of your existence."

One cannot doubt that Holmes speaks of Watson here, and a greater compliment he could not pay. That Holmes should speak so highly of Watson's writing, and of Watson's company, is quite telling. We cannot doubt that he meant every word, for clearly Holmes did, and would always, consider Watson the very best of company.

The Crooked Man

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Crooked Man* in September of 1889. Given that Watson tells us that it has been a few months since his marriage and makes reference to summer, Baring-Gould's date is likely correct. The story was first published in 1893.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes arrives one summer's evening on Watson's doorstep with a request for Watson to join him in the final stages, and stand as a witness, in what will prove to be a most unusual case. Two days prior, Holmes had been called out on a case of murder. The murdered man was Colonel James Barclay, the suspect his wife, Nancy Barclay. Holmes, however, was quickly able to deduce that a third man, along with his strange animal companion, had been in the room, and that this man left with the room's key in his pocket. An interview with Nancy's friend, Miss Morrison, revealed a chance meeting with a deformed cripple (whose back was so crooked that he walked bent over) on the very night of Colonel Barclay's murder. According to Miss Morrison, Nancy seemed quite familiar with the man. Holmes has found this man and, with Watson's aid, is now ready to get a full account of the events which took place on the night of Colonel Barclay's death.

The Subtext:

One summer night, a few months after my marriage, I was seated by my own hearth smoking a last pipe and nodding over a novel, for my day's work had been an exhausting one.

The above sentence is our introduction to *The Crooked Man*, and it warrants examination, for it contains a very singular point of interest.

Notice that Watson tells us that the day in question occurred a few months after his marriage. We have commented on the frequency of Watson's participation in Holmes' cases in the months following Watson's marriage, and yet, it begs repeating, for it really is quite suggestive. Recall that Watson, according to Baring-Gould, married Mary Morstan on May 1, 1889. According to Baring-Gould, the following cases took place

‘a few months after Watson’s marriage:

The Boscombe Valley Mystery

The Stockbroker’s Clerk

The Naval Treaty

The Cardboard Box

The Engineer’s Thumb

The Crooked Man

And this is limited to using Baring-Gould’s dates. If we assume Mary to be Watson’s first (and possibly only) wife, then we must also account for the cases Baring-Gould dated during Watson’s supposed first marriage. In fact, were we to count the number of cases Watson’s sets some few months after his marriage, I expect we would be quite surprised by the sheer number of them. Clearly, for a man newly married, Watson seems less inclined to spend time with his wife and more inclined to spend time with Sherlock Holmes.

Watson’s next statement is even more curious, for he tells us:

My wife had already gone upstairs, and the sound of the locking of the hall door some time before told me that the servants had also retired.

We later learn that it is a quarter to twelve, and yet, here Watson is, awake and reading a book, while his new bride warms their bed alone. Surely it is not presumptuous to find this unusual. One would expect, especially given Mary’s warm nature, that Watson should be only too overjoyed to join his wife in their bedroom. Clearly this is not the case.

We can examine this further, as, upon hearing a knock upon the door, Watson is very particular to mention his exhaustion. Why would he, a man exhausted by a day’s work, and newly married to a warm and endearing woman, further exhaust himself by staying up late to read when he could have very easily retired with his wife? One wonders if, perhaps, their marriage had already grown disagreeable.

Watson, naturally expecting a patient, heads out into the hall to open the door. His unexpected visitor is, indeed, a pleasant surprise.

To my astonishment it was Sherlock Holmes who stood upon my step.

“Ah, Watson,” said he, I hoped that I might not be too late to catch you.”

“My dear fellow, pray come in.”

Note Watson’s excitement here. His invitation, which suggests that his exhaustion is no longer a matter of concern. That Holmes should incite such a reaction, whereas

Mary could not, is quite telling.

Holmes, of course, makes himself quite at home, strolling into Watson's home without a care in the world. It is quite obvious that Holmes knows where Watson's loyalties lie.

In fact, Holmes is so confident with his place in Watson's life (after months of wooing Watson away from Mary) that he immediately begins dazzling Watson with a display of deduction. All of this is followed by one of the most suggestive requests in all of Canon.

"Could you put me up to-night?"

Watson's response:

"With pleasure."

Note that Watson is not willing to join his wife in bed, but that he is willing to put Holmes up for the night. Curious, is it not?

Holmes, of course, verifies Watson's response by stating:

"You told me that you had bachelor quarters for one, and I see that you have no gentleman visitor at present. Your hat-stand proclaims as much."

It is quite obvious, then, that Watson has, on numerous occasions since marrying and moving into his current residence, invited Holmes to come and stay. Although it has only been a few months since Watson left Baker Street, it is quite obvious that Watson does miss his Holmes, and that he desires Holmes' presence. In fact, Watson's confirmation of:

"I shall be delighted if you will stay."

Only serves to strengthen our argument, for it becomes quite evident that Watson truly would be delighted by Holmes' presence.

Holmes' response is quite interesting, too, for there is a decided air of territoriality in Holmes' claiming of Watson's hat stand:

"I'll fill the vacant peg then."

This scene, and Watson's undying devotion and loyalty to Holmes, continues when Watson, despite the late hour, offers to cook Holmes dinner. This is made evident by Holmes' dismissal of a meal.

"No, thank you, I had some supper at Waterloo, but I'll smoke a pipe with you with pleasure."

Watson has already told us that the servants have retired, and while we may view this as an empty offer, in keeping with Victorian propriety, it is still remarkable that Watson

would think enough of Holmes' comfort to extend this offer. Should Holmes have agreed, Watson would have been very much obliged to arrange a late night supper.

Dinner dismissed, the pair soon retire to Watson's sitting room, where they sit, opposite one another, while smoking in silence. This silence is soon broken when Holmes, in one of his more playful moods, begins in on an old favourite game --deducing to Watson's amazement. This is, of course, not unusual, or unexpected, but upon Watson expressing incredulity, Holmes' response is quite telling.

"I have the advantage of knowing your habits, my dear Watson," said he.

We do not doubt that Holmes does indeed know Watson's habits, for he has spent the better part of eight years studying Watson on an almost daily basis. That Holmes should confess this, however, is quite remarkable, for it is an indication, not just of the intimacy between Holmes and Watson, but of Holmes' need for an intimate connection with Watson.

Holmes' confession, however, is not enough, and Holmes then goes on to compliment Watson, something we are seeing with increased frequency; it is obvious here that Holmes wants very much to retain the close association he and Watson have formed.

"The same may be said, my dear fellow, for the effect of some of these little sketches of yours, which is entirely meretricious, depending as it does upon your retaining in your own hands some factors in the problem which are never imparted to the reader."

That Holmes should compare his art of deduction to Watson's writing is quite the compliment indeed.

Holmes is not alone in his powers of observation, however, for while Holmes may know Watson's habits, Watson knows Holmes. This is very evident in Watson's description of Holmes, for here Holmes has become quite impassioned by the case, and Watson, always observing Holmes, is quick to notice.

His eyes kindled and a slight flush sprang into his thin cheeks. For an instant the veil had lifted upon his keen, intense nature, but for an instant only. When I glanced again his face had resumed that red-Indian composure which had made so many regard him as a machine rather than a man.

That Holmes should show such passion in Watson's presence is quite remarkable, but that it should be Watson who is privileged enough to know the man behind the machine (and indeed, be shown the man behind the machine) is quite incredible.

Holmes' outburst and Watson's appreciation of Holmes' excitement soon gives way to an invitation. The exchange which follows is quite suggestive.

"If you could accompany me in that last step you might be of considerable service to me."

"I should be delighted."

"Could you go as far as Aldershot to-morrow?"

"I have no doubt Jackson would take my practice."

"Very good. I want to start by the 11:10 from Waterloo."

Here Holmes requests Watson's aid and companionship, both of which Watson gives without hesitation. This is not quite enough for Holmes, and so he continues to question Watson, finally ensuring that Watson is more than willing to set aside his practice and family life for Holmes' case. What is interesting here (and again, a reoccurring pattern) is that Watson has already remarked upon how busy his practice is. Despite this, he is more than willing to hand it over to his neighbour to follow Holmes out on one of his cases. Clearly, and again, Watson has demonstrated his loyalty to Holmes.

In fact, Watson is so enamoured with Holmes that he is no longer consumed by exhaustion in Holmes' presence, and responds, upon Holmes' offer to postpone their conversation until morning:

"I was sleepy before you came. I am quite wakeful now."

That Watson finds Holmes' company so stimulating that at sometime past twelve in the evening Watson is not only willing to forgo sleep, but finds himself no longer in need of sleep, is quite remarkable.

At Watson's insistence, Holmes begins filling Watson in on the case, including the necessary background information. Halfway through his tale, Holmes seems to realize the late hour, and offers again to pick up the story first thing in the morning. Watson, we will soon see, will have none of this.

"But really, Watson, I am keeping you up, and I might just as well tell you all this on our way to Aldershot to-morrow."

"Thank you, you have gone rather too far to stop."

Interesting, is it not, that Watson is still enjoying Holmes' company too much to allow Holmes to retire to bed.

Holmes' worry does not lessen, although he does finish telling his story. He must sense Watson's exhaustion, for upon concluding, Holmes states:

..."I should be the criminal myself if I kept you out of bed any longer."

Clearly Holmes recognizes Watson's need for Holmes' companionship (a fact which no doubt thrilled the Great Detective) and yet Holmes cares enough for Watson's well

being to bundle Watson off to bed.

The next morning the pair head out to Aldershot, and here Watson's observations of Holmes, and indeed, the statement regarding his own state, are quite suggestive.

In spite of his capacity for concealing his emotions, I could easily see that Holmes was in a state of suppressed excitement, while I was myself tingling with that half-sporting, half-intellectual pleasure which I invariably experienced when I associated myself with him in his investigations.

Note how well Watson knows Holmes; well enough that he is able to see through Holmes' mask and register Holmes' state of excitement. Note too Watson's comment that he was *tingling* with pleasure, and that Watson attributed this sensation to Holmes. The subtext here is so blatant that it does not require explanation.

The story next turns to the telling of Henry Wood's tale, and when next we return to Holmes and Watson, they are heading for the station and home. This brings us to two interesting elements contained within the story, both of which are due examination.

Holmes, upon hearing Henry Wood's tale, does not give Wood over to the police. Instead he offers to find another way to prove Nancy Barclay's innocence without revealing Wood's involvement. This is quite interested, and yet, not entirely new. Several times throughout Canon, Holmes has allowed someone involved in a crime to 'get away', and in each of these incidences Holmes' reasons for doing so can be tied directly to love.

Henry Wood loved Nancy Barclay, and the feeling was, once, quite mutual. That Wood's motives were driven entirely from his love for Nancy and his need for vengeance against the betrayal caused by Nancy's husband proved to Holmes that Wood was not a threat and did not deserve punishment. Holmes did not always operate according to the law. He sought justice, and in matters of love, Holmes always sided on the side of lovers. This is quite suggestive, for a man incapable of love would not be capable of this empathy.

Our second element is a curious one, for here we question why it was that Holmes needed Watson's involvement. Holmes stated that he required Watson to stand as a witness, and yet, Holmes did not seem at all surprised by Wood's innocence, and so we can easily imagine that Holmes knew (well ahead of time) that he would not need a witness. That Holmes, despite having concluded the case (all that remained were incidentals) should still seek Watson out is quite telling, for it suggests that Holmes wanted Watson's company rather than Watson's professional presence and needed an

excuse to seek it out. Clearly, Holmes missed his Boswell.

Wisteria Lodge

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge* in March of 1890. Watson tells us that the case took place in March of 1892. As Watson's date occurs during Holmes' hiatus (indeed, Watson would have been under the impression that Holmes had perished during this time), we can automatically discount Watson's date. Baring-Gould's date is also problematic, for Watson is living in Baker Street and clearly not married in the story. Holmes also makes reference to Watson's publications, implying that Watson has been publishing Holmes' cases for some time. Recall that in March of 1890 Watson had only published two of Holmes' cases (STUD and SIGN). This, combined with Mary's absence, and Holmes' presence, implies a date sometime after Holmes' return. Further evidence for a later date can also be found in Holmes' reference to Colonel Carruthers. While not a Colonel, the only Carruthers to appear in Canon was Mr. Carruthers in *The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist*. *The Solitary Cyclist* was set in 1895. *Wisteria Lodge* was first published in 1908.

Synopsis:

Divided into two parts (*The Singular Experience of Mr. John Eccles* and *The Tiger of San Pedro*) *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge* begins with Mr. Eccles visit to Holmes and Watson's rooms in Baker Street. He is quite perturbed, and wishes Holmes to investigate the disappearance of a household in Esher, where he was a guest for the evening. The story soon takes a dramatic turn when, with the arrival of the police, we learn that Mr. Eccles host, a man by the name of Mr. Garcia, was murdered in the night. Mr. Eccles, having been the last man to see Mr. Garcia alive, is compelled to tell his strange tale of waking that morning to find the residence of Mr. Garcia completely empty. After several failed enquires, Mr. Eccles then sought out the aid of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes, his actions mirrored by a local inspector, Baynes, is soon able to tie Garcia's death to a once merciless South American dictator known as the Tiger of San Pedro.

The Subtext:

I find it recorded in my notebook that it was a bleak and windy day towards the end of March in the year 1892. Holmes had received a telegram while we sat at our lunch, and he

had scribbled a reply. He made no remark, but the matter remained in his thoughts, for he stood in front of the fire afterwards with a thoughtful face, smoking his pipe, and casting an occasional glance at the message. Suddenly he turned upon me with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

So begins *The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge*, and while we have chosen to ignore Watson's dating of the story, the opening paragraph does contain several elements of subtextual interest.

Note first Watson's statement that Holmes, having received and replied to a telegram, allows the matter to remain in his thoughts. While we have no doubt that Holmes would be capable of reading Watson's thoughts, we see here that Watson is just as capable of reading Holmes'. Since Canon dictates that Watson is not capable of such astonishing displays of deduction, we must therefore suggest that Watson came to his conclusion through his intimate awareness of Holmes. Watson knew the thoughts that occupied Holmes' mind, because, quite simply, Watson knew Holmes. Throughout Canon we have been witness to Watson's study of Holmes, and so it is not surprising to learn that Watson has become, in essence, a Holmesian expert.

We turn next to Watson's description of Holmes as he *turned upon me with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes*. This is not the first such instance Watson has described the mischievous twinkle in Holmes' eyes. In fact, it occurs quite frequently and, on each such occurrence, this twinkle is accompanied by Holmes introducing Watson to a case. Clearly Holmes took great pleasure in including Watson in his work. That is to say nothing of Watson's continual obsession with Holmes' eyes.

Holmes reads Watson the telegram he has received, and briefly asks Watson his thoughts on the wording of the telegram. They are not given much time to discuss the case, for in short order their client, Mr. Scott Eccles, arrives. He is barely able to introduce himself before the police arrive on his heels, and it some time before Holmes is able to convince all involved to let Mr. Eccles tell his strange tale. Here, of course, we deviate slightly, for Mr. Eccles' tale is quite interesting in its own right.

Through Mr. Eccles' story, we are once again privy to a subtextually heavy subplot. It is through this subplot that we are given insight into homosexuality in the Victorian era, and, indeed, into Holmes and Watson's relationship.

We speak here, of course, of the relationship between Mr. Eccles and Mr. Garcia. We soon learn that Mr. Eccles has passed the night at Mr. Garcia's house, and that Mr. Garcia was found murdered in the night. Note Mr. Eccles statement concerning his

and Garcia's meeting:

"I am a bachelor," said he, "and being of a sociable turn I cultivate a large number of friends. Among these are the family of a retired brewer called Melville, living at Albemarle Mansion, Kensington. It was at his table that I met some weeks ago a young fellow named Garcia. He was, I understood, of Spanish descent and connected in some way with the embassy. He spoke perfect English, was pleasing in his manners, and as good-looking a man as ever I saw in my life."

Eccles goes on to tell us:

"In some way we struck up quite a friendship, this young fellow and I. He seemed to take a fancy to me from the first, and within two days of our meeting he came to see me at Lee. One thing led to another, and it ended in his inviting me out to spend a few days at his house, Wisteria Lodge, between Esher and Oxshott."

We have mentioned, on several occasions, the propensity of Victorian era authors to write in code. Victorian propriety being what it was, it was quite natural to hide the author's intended meaning behind thinly veiled wording. Note in the above Eccles' statement that Garcia was *as good looking a man as ever I saw*. Note too Eccles' emphasis of bachelorhood. Then there is his reference to *quite a friendship*, and the rather blatant *one thing led to another*. The reader need not be reminded that this was a friendship which quickly evolved into house visits. When read on its own, the above paragraphs are quite suggestive, and yet, when examined in terms of Victorian code, we begin to see that Watson was clearly hiding the true relationship between Mr. Eccles and Mr. Garcia; that they were, in fact, casual lovers.

While this relationship is later explained as Garcia's need for an alibi, one must question why, then, Garcia did not simply use Mr. Melville, who had, after all, introduced the pair. While it is entirely likely that Garcia did need an alibi, it is equally likely that he obtained this alibi by courting a like-minded *stranger*.

Upon completing his story, Mr. Eccles is escorted to Scotland Yard so that they might take his statement. This leaves Holmes and Watson once again alone in Baker Street and they soon turn their attention to theorizing over the case. They are, however, interrupted by an answer to a telegram Holmes had sent. Holmes' actions here are quite interesting:

An answer had arrived to Holmes's telegram before our Surrey officer had returned. Holmes read it and was about to place it in his notebook when he caught a glimpse of my expectant face. He tossed it across with a laugh.

This is quite thoughtful of Holmes, and I must confess, quite endearing, too. That Holmes should glance first to Watson, as if to ascertain Watson's mood, is quite remarkable. That, upon spotting Watson's expression, Holmes should immediately give Watson the telegram is incredible. Holmes, it would appear, is quite considerate of Watson's feelings, and this is highly suggestive of a later date, for one can easily imagine that, upon Holmes' return, and with the sudden absence of Mary and Watson's return to Baker Street, the pair rekindled their once tentative romance.

Holmes and Watson soon leave Baker Street, and head out to Surrey in order to start their investigation. There, *Holmes and I had taken things for the night, and found comfortable quarters at the Bull*. It is interesting to note that, later, Watson refers to their quarters as apartments, implying that they were sharing the space. One can only assume, given that they stayed in a small town inn, that their quarters were quite cosy indeed.

Shortly after arriving and settling into their quarters, the pair head out to Wisteria Lodge in the company of Inspector Baynes. There they are given a tour of the lodge and are shown the evidence collected during Baynes' investigation. It is with their leaving that we are given what is perhaps one of the most telling statements in the whole of the story. Here, Watson tells us:

I could tell by numerous subtle signs, which might have been lost upon anyone but myself, that Holmes was on a hot scent. As impassive as ever to the casual observer, there were none the less a subdued eagerness and suggestion of tension in his brightened eyes and brisker manner which assured me that the game was afoot. After his habit he said nothing, and after mine I asked no questions. Sufficient for me to share the sport and lend my humble help to the capture without distracting that intent brain with needless interruption. All would come round to me in due time.

Incredible, is it not, that Holmes should consider Watson incapable of deduction. Watson is only too capable, and here he demonstrates this well. That Watson should know, simply by having read various subtle signs, that Holmes was on a hot scent is very indicative of Watson's powers of observation. We cannot fault Holmes too much for his misjudgement, however, for Watson is very selective in what he chooses to observe. In fact, his powers of deduction do not often extend to a case, and that is because, more often than not, Watson has spent the whole of the case studying, examining and observing Holmes. Holmes is his subject, and Watson knows his subject well. We have referred to Watson as a Holmesian expert, and indeed he is, for there is no one

else who can claim to know Holmes as intimately as Watson does.

We see here, too, the understanding which existed between the two men. Clearly they functioned as one, and were likely quite lost without the other. That Watson should exhibit such patience is quite indicative of the trust he afforded Holmes, and that Watson should be content merely in sharing Holmes' adventures is quite suggestive of the loyalty he afforded Holmes. Truly, Watson was Holmes' man to the letter.

Watson would indeed get his wish, for in due time Holmes was able to put the pieces of the case together, save a woman's life, and discover the truth behind the curious incidence at Wisteria Lodge. The story ends back in Baker Street, and while this does not present us with additional subtextual evidence, it is interesting to note that Holmes, when addressing Watson, uses *my dear* seven times, all within the first half of the story. In fact, the frequency of its use is quite jarring, as most cases witness two or three such uses. This begs the question: Why, in this case above all other cases, did Holmes' continually refer to Watson with such affection? Is it possible that Holmes and Watson had once again established an intimate relationship? Could it be that, with Mary's passing, and Watson's return to Baker Street, Watson had also returned to Holmes' bed?

Silver Blaze

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of Silver Blaze* in September of 1890. Watson does not give us a date, but does appear to be living in Baker Street, making no mention of Mary, or his marriage. As *Silver Blaze* was first published in December of 1892, this implies that the case took place sometime before Watson's marriage. Indeed, several other chronologies date *Silver Blaze* in 1888.

Synopsis:

The Adventure of Silver Blaze is one of Doyle's more popular stories, and tells the tale of the disappearance of Silver Blaze, a horse favoured to win the Wessex Cub. In addition to Silver Blaze's disappearance, Holmes is also confronted with the mysterious murder of Silver Blaze's trainer, John Straker. Holmes, convinced that the local authorities lack the skills needed to make progress, hastens to Dartmoor where, after taking an evening stroll across the moor, he is able to discover the whereabouts of the infamous horse. Unwilling to let the case conclude without at least a little of his dramatic flare, Holmes arranges for one of the most shocking unveilings in all of Canon.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of Silver Blaze begins in Baker Street, Watson watching a restless Holmes as he paces in front of the fire. A few moments later, Holmes announces his intention to look into the disappearance of Silver Blaze, a statement which does not seem to surprise Watson; indeed, he seems to have been expecting it. Watson tells us:

Yet, silent as he was, I knew perfectly well what it was over which he was brooding.

And this summarizes the scene nicely, for we get the impression that Watson has been waiting for Holmes to announce his intention to look into the matter. Watson knows his Holmes well, and is now capable of anticipating Holmes' actions. This speaks to the intimacy between the two men; that Watson should know Holmes well enough to anticipate his thoughts and actions is highly suggestive. It is a short scene, and yet we are given the impression that Holmes and Watson are bound together, the pair sharing a connection more often reserved for lovers.

When, therefore, he suddenly announced his intention of setting out for the scene of the

drama, it was only what I had both expected and hoped for.

"I should be most happy to go down with you if I should not be in the way," said I.

Not only does Watson tell us that he expected as much, but he states clearly that he hoped for it as well. While this alone is not suggestive, what is suggestive is his humble request. Having told the reader that he had hoped Holmes would take the case, Watson then asks Holmes' permission to *go down with you*. It is quite evident, then, that it has been some time since Holmes' last case, and that Watson was quite keen to once again witness Holmes in action. Watson's timid request here also suggests that Silver Blaze was an earlier case; before Watson came into the role of chronicler and helpmate. If this is the case, then the intimate awareness Watson demonstrates in his earlier statement is even more remarkable.

Holmes' response, too, is quite telling, for Holmes states:

"My dear Watson, you would confer a great favour upon me by coming."

Holmes would not dream of attending the case without his Watson. We see here, too, Holmes' delicacy where Watson is concerned, for, upon noting the hesitancy in Watson's tone, Holmes is very careful to encourage Watson's participation. Note Holmes' use of *my dear*, which can easily be read as Holmes' attempt at reassurance. This tentativeness (on behalf of both Holmes and Watson) suggests that Silver Blaze took place at a time when Holmes and Watson were still uncertain as to the definition of their relationship.

Watson, naturally, agrees immediately, and soon the pair are off for Dartmoor. On their journey, Holmes finds an opportunity to show off his skills:

"We are going well," said he, looking out of the window and glancing at his watch. "Our rate at present is fifty-three and a half miles an hour."

Here we turn away from the story for a moment in order to delve into theory, for it is within Sherlockian theory that we find evidence of subtext.

A.D. Galbraith, in *The Real Moriarty*, suggested that this calculation was far more complicated than Holmes made it seem. In fact, according to Galbraith, it is practically impossible (to the degree of accuracy Holmes' confidence suggests) to determine the speed of a train simply by timing the passage of mile markers. Galbraith suggests that Holmes, a logical and rational individual, would have known that the probability for error was exceptionally high (trains in the Victorian era rarely travelled at a constant speed) and would not have overstated his accuracy. As Holmes distinctly tells Watson that their rate is fifty-three and a half miles, we must assume that Holmes' precise cal-

ulation was, in fact, an attempt to impress Watson, rather than an actual calculation. For additional information on the math needed to make this work, see also Jay Finley Christ's, [Sherlock Pulls a Fast One](#).

If Galbraith is correct, and Holmes did give a precise answer to impress Watson, one must question why. We have suggested that *Silver Blaze* took place during a period of transition. Holmes and Watson have been living together, first as room-mates, and then friends, and have only just begun crossing the line between friendship and romance (this is prior to Watson's marriage, and the reader will recall the argument in *SIGN* which led Watson to seek out a marriage and leave Holmes' side). If this is the case, then this playful wooing can be seen as a natural extension of the flirtatious attitude which must have accompanied this newfound discovery on both Holmes and Watson's behalf.

Further evidence for the early development of a relationship can be found in numerous passages throughout *Silver Blaze*. Here, for example, Watson tells us:

I lay back against the cushions, puffing at my cigar, while Holmes, leaning forward, with his long, thin forefinger checking off the points upon the palm of his left hand, gave me a sketch of the events which had led to our journey.

This occurs just as Holmes begins detailing his thoughts on the case, Watson content to lean back and listen. What is curious here is Watson's observation of Holmes' hands. We have noted before Watson's obsession with Holmes' eyes, and yet, here this attention shifts. Could it be that Watson was recalling (or possibly imagining) exactly what those thin, long fingers were capable of?

Watson does, however, pay attention to Holmes' recounting, and so is able, midway through, to interrupt Holmes and ask a very pointed question.

"One moment," I asked. "Did the stable-boy, when he ran out with the dog, leave the door unlocked behind him?"

"Excellent, Watson, excellent!" murmured my companion. "The importance of the point struck me so forcibly that I sent a special wire to Dartmoor yesterday to clear the matter up."

Note Holmes' pride here, and, indeed, Watson's insight. It is obvious that Watson has been paying close attention to Holmes' methods, and that he is fast picking up on Holmes' trade. Holmes, of course, seems quite thrilled that Watson has advanced so far (a marked difference from the Holmes of earlier days, who deliberately withheld his methods so that he would not render himself obsolete). Clearly Holmes has come to

trust Watson a good deal. Is it too much to suggest that this shift might correspond with a change in their relationship?

Their conversation continues until they arrive at the station, where they meet with Inspector Gregory who takes them down, via carriage, to King's Pyland.

We all sprang out with the exception of Holmes, who continued to lean back with his eyes fixed upon the sky in front of him, entirely absorbed in his own thoughts. It was only when I touched his arm that he roused himself with a violent start and stepped out of the carriage.

Note the intimacy of this statement. One can almost picture Watson, hesitating briefly before reaching out for Holmes, placing his hand gently on Holmes' arm, perhaps caressing the fabric of Holmes' jacket, not quite able to hide the affection in his touch. The scene is quite breathtaking, filled with such warmth and, indeed, love.

Holmes, haven been roused by Watson, excuses himself for his day-dreaming, and Watson tells us:

There was a gleam in his eyes and a suppressed excitement in his manner which convinced me, used as I was to his ways, that his hand was upon a clue, though I could not imagine where he had found it.

Again we are privy to Watson's intimate knowledge of Holmes, for with a mere glance Watson is able to deduce Holmes' thoughts. Watson admits, too, that he is used to Holmes' ways, a statement which suggests that Watson is only too familiar with all of Holmes.

Having arrived, Holmes asks to see the scene where the body of John Straker was found and then, after a brief investigation, Holmes and Watson set out across the moor so that Holmes might test a hypothesis.

Holmes' hypothesis soon proves correct, and, after a brief visit to the neighbouring stables at Mapleton, Holmes and Watson return to King's Pyland. On the journey back, Holmes requests that Watson say nothing to Colonel Ross regarding the discovery of his horse, Silver Blaze. Watson agrees, stating:

"Certainly not without your permission."

This statement of loyalty becomes even more obvious when, upon their return, Watson is forced to endure Colonel Ross's criticism of Holmes' work. Watson, without hesitation, jumps to Holmes' defence:

"At least you have his assurance that your horse will run," said I.

"Yes, I have his assurance," said the colonel with a shrug of his shoulders. "I should prefer to have the horse."

I was about to make some reply in defence of my friend when he entered the room again.

Aside from demonstrating Watson's loyalty to Holmes, the above passage also demonstrates Watson's protective nature where Holmes is concerned. It is quite evident that Watson cares a good deal for Holmes; enough that he is more than willing to blindly accept Holmes' conditions, and fight for Holmes' honour.

Watson, however, is not able to rise to Holmes' defence, for Holmes announces his intention to leave. As they climb into their waiting carriage, Holmes pauses to ask a question of the stable boy. The lad's answer pleases Holmes a good deal, and, turning to Watson, Holmes states:

"A long shot, Watson, a very long shot", said he, pinching my arm.

Curious, is it not, that Holmes, a man not known for his tactility, should accentuate this point by pinching Watson's arm. It is perhaps even more curious that Holmes, despite his standoffish nature, is more than willing to express himself physically with Watson. We know of no other character in the whole of Canon who can claim to have received Holmes' touch on so frequent a basis.

The pair return briefly to London, and within a few days Holmes is able to solve the case completely. This triumph is accentuated by Holmes having won *a little on this next race*, and we can only imagine that Holmes celebrated his winnings, and his victory, by treating Watson to dinner and a concert. What they did upon their return to Baker Street is best left to the imagination.

The Beryl Coronet

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet* in December of 1890. Watson tells us that it is February, and makes reference to living in Baker Street. Again, no mention of Mary is made, suggesting that Watson is not married. As Baring-Gould's assumptions are entirely based on weather patterns, we have no difficulties accepting Watson's month. Given that *The Beryl Coronet* was first published in May of 1892, we can suggest that the case took place prior to Watson meeting Mary Morstan.

Synopsis:

Mr. Alexander Holder, a banker, extends a bank loan to an illustrious client, accepting as security one of the most valuable public possessions in existence; the Beryl Coronet. So loath is Mr. Holder to allow this treasure out of his sight that he decides to keep the precious jewels by his side, day and night, until the loan has been paid in full and the coronet is returned. Sadly, on the very first night Mr. Holder brings the coronet home, he wakes in the middle of the night to find his son twisting the gold in his hands, three of the stones missing. Frantic, Mr. Holder first orders the arrest of his son, and then, upon realizing that the local police are incapable of solving the crime, seeks the aid of Sherlock Holmes.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet begins at the bay window in Baker Street, with Watson observing a madman on the street below. Holmes, we shall soon see, is quite content to use Watson's observation as an excuse to invade Watson's space.

My friend rose lazily from his armchair and stood with his hands in the pockets of his dressing-gown, looking over my shoulder.

This is not the first occasion in which Holmes has chosen to glance over Watson's shoulder rather than make use of the other window lining the street¹³. In fact, the pattern is exceedingly familiar, and it is curious to note that, when given the option, Holmes chooses to press himself against Watson's back rather than seek out an unob-

¹³ Watson, in *A Study in Scarlet*, mentions that their front room has two broad windows overlooking the street.

structed view.

Holmes' fun is soon interrupted by the arrival of Watson's madman; one Alexander Holder, a banker from a well known London firm. He brings with him a case, and the comforting scene of domesticity that introduced the story soon gives way to the horror of Mr. Holder's predicament.

After hearing of Mr. Holder's loss, Holmes immediately proposes they travel to Mr. Holder's home in Streatham. Watson tells us:

My friend insisted upon my accompanying them in their expedition, which I was eager enough to do, for my curiosity and sympathy were deeply stirred by the story to which we had listened.

We are pleased of course to note here that Holmes still wishes Watson by his side, and that Watson is only too eager to assist Holmes in his cases.

Watson then turns to pondering over the case, and here he begins to question the guilt of Mr. Holder's son. Watson states:

I confess that the guilt of the banker's son appeared to me to be as obvious as it did to his unhappy father, but still I had such faith in Holmes's judgement that I felt that there must be some grounds for hope as long as he was dissatisfied with the accepted explanation.

Note Watson's faith and his absolute trust. Holmes believes Mr. Holder's son to be innocent, and so Watson will not dismiss the notion, for he knows (and trusts) Holmes too well to discount any of Holmes' theories.

Their time in Streatham passes quickly; just enough time for Holmes to go over the grounds and inspect the windows before returning to Baker Street. There, Watson tells us:

It was not yet three when we found ourselves in our rooms once more. He hurried to his chamber and was down again in a few minutes dressed as a common loafer.

Note here Watson's use of the term *our rooms*, implying that Watson is living in Baker Street. We know, given the story's publication date, that the story could not have taken place after Holmes' return. We know, too, that neither Mary, nor Watson's marriage, is mentioned, implying that The Beryl Coronet takes place before Watson's introduction to Mary Morstan.

With this in mind, reread Watson's statement. He says:

He hurried to his chamber and was down again in a few minutes...

The author wishes to draw particular attention to the phrase, *down again in a few minutes*.

We must now turn our attention to Sherlockian scholarship; for it is there that we will discover the subtextual implications of this statement.

Most scholars agree that Holmes and Watson's quarters took up two floors. On the first floor (American second) was the sitting room. Off of the sitting room was Holmes' bedroom, and upstairs was Watson's bedroom. The occasional scholar will place Watson's bedroom next to Holmes' on the first floor, but nowhere will we find reference to Holmes' bedroom being on the second (American third) floor.

(This information comes largely from the layout designs of similar houses in Baker Street, as well as from various Canon based references. For more information on the layout of 221B, see the works of: Vincent Starrett, David Richardson and James Holroyd.)

Given that the convention is for Holmes' bedroom to be on the same level as the sitting room, why then do we see Holmes coming *down* from his room?

As Holmes would say, if we eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. The answer, then, is elementary.

Holmes has moved into Watson's room.

Holmes, now disguised as a common loafer, announces his intentions to pursue a line of investigation. He is, however, loath to go without his Watson:

"I only wish that you could come with me, Watson, but I fear that it won't do."

Holmes knows that he will be better able to achieve his task alone, and yet the thought of working without his trusty comrade is so distressing that Holmes vocalizes his desire to have Watson with him. This openness on Holmes' behalf can also be seen as further evidence for a shift in their relationship.

We see this again a few moments later when Holmes, finding himself passing Baker Street, cannot resist the urge to pop in and see his Watson.

"I only looked in as I passed," said he. "I am going right on."

While this is quite interesting, what is perhaps even more interesting is Holmes' comment:

"It may be some time before I get back. Don't wait up for me in case I should be late."

Holmes is either quite presumptuous (assuming that Watson would wait up) or Watson has gotten into the habit of waiting for Holmes to accompany him to bed.

Watson does not dispute this intimacy; indeed, he tells us:

I could see by his manner that he had stronger reasons for satisfaction than his words alone would imply. His eyes twinkled, and there was even a touch of colour upon his sallow

cheeks.

This, of course, comes after Holmes' announcement that he *must get these disreputable clothes off*. We have no doubt that Watson whole-heartedly agreed.

Despite Holmes' insistence that Watson not wait up, Watson does exactly that, telling us:

I waited until midnight, but there was no sign of his return, so I retired to my room.

Again the intimacy between the two men becomes quite obvious, for this is not the behaviour of two room-mates; indeed, it can hardly qualify as the behaviour of two friends. We assume here that this story took place before Watson's marriage, and when we examine it in chronological order we see that the potential for a romantic (and, indeed, sexual) relationship is quite probable.

We know that Holmes and Watson began their relationship as room-mates. We know, too, that a friendship slowly evolved from their sharing of space. We know that Watson fell in love with and proposed to Mary Morstan within the span of a few days, at a time when he and Holmes were seen to be arguing. Is it not reasonable, then, to assume that there existed a period of time, before Watson's marriage, when Holmes and Watson sought one other as lovers?

The Final Problem

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates The Final Problem between April 24 and May 4, 1891. Watson is quite particular concerning the date, telling us that the case began on the 24th of April, 1891, which corresponds with Baring-Gould's chronology. The Final Problem was first published in December of 1893.

Synopsis:

It was with a heavy heart that Dr. John Watson took up his pen to write what was intended to be the last adventure of Mr. Sherlock Holmes. In The Final Problem, Holmes comes up against Professor Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime, and most dangerous man in London. Moriarty is not easily beaten, however, and Holmes is forced to escape to the Continent when things don't work out as planned, Moriarty hot on his heels. Their final confrontation is only too inevitable, reaching a climax at the infamous Reichenbach Falls. The two men, locked in combat, plummet over the precipice, simultaneously destroying the most dangerous criminal in London, and the foremost champion of the law.

The Subtext:

Before delving into the story itself, we must first take a moment and examine Watson's chronology.

The Final Problem was first published in December of 1893. Holmes was thought to have perished on May 4, 1891. It should also be remembered that Holmes reappeared (The Empty House) in the spring of 1894, some three to four months after FINA's publication.

We must also note that Watson first published A Scandal in Bohemia (the first story in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes) in July of 1891, some two months after Holmes' death. Between the writing of SCAN and the writing of FINA, Watson published some twenty-three cases, contained within The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes.

Allow us to put this in context.

Watson, at the time of Holmes' death (ten years into their relationship) had written

up two of Holmes' cases. Holmes perishes alongside Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls, and Watson returns to England to immediately begin chronicling Holmes' work. In the span of two years, he writes some twenty-three stories (almost a story a month). Incredible, is it not? Bear in mind that at the time of Holmes' return, Mary was no longer in the picture, and if we assume her death, then we must also suggest that she was likely quite ill during this time. If we assume a divorce, then it is entirely possible that it was Watson's obsession with Holmes (or Holmes' ghost) that finally shattered their marriage.

This will become even more incredible when we examine *The Empty House*, which was first published in 1903. Coincidentally, Holmes retired in 1903, leaving London and Watson behind. Watson, it would appear, is incapable of living without his Holmes, and so, with Holmes' death (and later, his retirement), Watson turned to documenting Holmes' cases a means of surrounding himself in Holmes' memory. This is obsessive behaviour, and very suggestive of Watson's need for his long-time friend and companion.

It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished.

For two years Watson has been writing and publishing Holmes' cases, and it is only now that Watson has decided to put aside his pen. There is such incredible grief in the above statement, and one can easily imagine the difficulty Watson had in deciding to move on with his life. One wonders if Mary was alive during this period of time, or whether Watson had already been made a widower. Watson's loneliness is felt throughout this piece, but it is here, in the introduction, that it is felt most acutely.

In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion, I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in his company from the chance which first brought us together at the period of the "Study in Scarlet"...

One can easily imagine, especially given that the bulk of these accounts occurred after Holmes' death, that Watson was indeed insensible with grief. In fact, one can easily imagine that Watson's stepping aside here (despite the existence of unpublished cases) had more to do with the pain which surfaced alongside these memories than Watson's need to move on. Despite this, one gets the impression that letting Holmes go is destroying the few remaining pieces of Watson's heart.

Watson's statement that he fears his accounts were incoherent and inadequate speak to the difficulty faced by Watson after Holmes' death. He wants (needs, even) to do

Holmes justice, and yet fears he has failed, for, at this point, Watson must no longer recall why he began chronicling Holmes' work. He became consumed by the need to honour Holmes' memory, and yet, now, after the passage of two years, Watson's intentions (and reasons) must seem quite hazy. We cannot doubt that Watson made the decision to publish Holmes' death, not only to save Holmes' reputation, but to save Watson from the growing bleakness that had become his every day existence.

It was my intention to have stopped there, and to have said nothing of that event which has created a void in my life which the lapse of two years has done little to fill.

There is such longing in this statement; such regret. Watson freely admits to having spent the last two years writing Holmes' cases in an attempt to fill the void of losing Holmes, and yet, it is slowly becoming evident to him that this void shall never be filled. Holmes on paper is not Holmes in the flesh, and it easy to imagine that this realization must have been devastating to poor Watson.

It may be remembered that after my marriage, and my subsequent start in private practice, the very intimate relations which had existed between Holmes and myself became to some extent modified.

This is a curious statement, for in addition to Watson's claim of a *very* intimate relationship with Holmes, Watson is also quite careful to note its modification. He does not tell us that these relations have ended, but instead suggests that they have been modified. A curious choice of words, one must agree, and one cannot help but wonder what change could have possibly occurred which would warrant such a statement. Watson leaving Baker Street cannot be considered 'to some extent modified', and so we must suggest that, here, Watson was referring to the shift from very intimate to intimate.

It is curious, too, that Watson should feel the need to remind his reader of the intimate connection between him and Holmes. As the public has been receiving monthly instalments of Holmes' cases, there is hardly a call for Watson's reminder. One wonders, then, if this statement was a final attempt by Watson to confess the true nature of his and Holmes' relationship. Watson is grieving, and it is entirely likely that this grief was made worse by the fact that Watson was unable to share (with anyone) the true impact Holmes' death had on Watson's life.

We must now leave Watson to his grief in order to raise a question concerning chronology. Watson tells us:

He still came to me from time to time when he desired a companion in his investigation,

but these occasions grew more and more seldom, until I find that in the year 1890 there were only three cases of which I retain any record.

And yet, in decoding *The Cardboard Box*, we have suggested that the above statement is a lie. Recall, in our analysis, we suggested:

The Cardboard Box did in fact take place in 1890, and was not one of Watson's three. In fact, there were a good deal more than three, for Watson and Mary had separated (likely due to Watson's continual abandonment of Mary for Holmes) and Watson had returned to Baker Street. Watson, of course, could not have allowed this scandalous information to come to light, and so he downplayed his role in Holmes' cases and rearranged several dates so as to maintain the illusion that he and Mary were happily married. In fact, it was not until the spring of 1891, when Holmes, in France on a case, urged Watson to reconcile with Mary (as Holmes, at this point, knew of Professor Moriarty and likely foresaw his imminent death).

We know that Watson is living away from Baker Street at the introduction of this case, and we know too that Mary is very much in the picture. We have proven that Watson spent a good many of his married years living in Baker Street (suggesting a separation). We can therefore deduce that Watson has reconciled with his wife and is once again living under Mary's roof.

The question becomes: why? And why at a time when Holmes was out of the country (seemingly obsessed with Moriarty)? Surely it is not too much to suggest that it was Holmes who encouraged Watson's reconciliation with his wife. And if so, to what purpose? Could Holmes have foreseen the tragic events at Reichenbach Falls? Could Holmes have wanted to spare Watson part of that grief by ensuring that Watson had someone to return home to? Or is it possible that Holmes, regardless of the outcome with Moriarty, felt ready to set aside his practice and seek out solitary study?

A thousand possibilities, each quite fascinating in its own right. Regardless of the reason, there is evidence to suggest that it was Holmes who initiated Watson's reconciliation with Mary. This will prove quite curious as we examine *The Empty House*, for it was only upon Mary's death that Holmes chose to return.

We return now to Watson's study, where Holmes has just arrived, seeking Watson's aid in his latest case. Watson tells us:

It struck me that he was looking even paler and thinner than usual.

To which Holmes replies:

"Yes, I have been using myself up rather too freely," he remarked, in answer to my look rather than to my words; "I have been a little pressed of late. Have you any objection to my

closing your shutters?"

Note that Watson does not need to ask; Holmes can read his thoughts in a mere glance, evidence of their close associate and the intimate knowledge Holmes had of Watson. This is even more remarkable if we choose to accept Watson's explanation that it has been some time since their last meeting. That, after so many months separation, the pair should be capable of silent communication is quite extraordinary.

Perhaps even more curious is Holmes' next question, and their resulting conversation:

"Is Mrs. Watson in?"

"She is away upon a visit."

"Indeed! You are alone?"

"Quite."

"Then it makes it the easier for me to propose that you should come away with me for a week to the Continent."

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere."

Note that Holmes' first thought is to inquire into Mary. Note, too, Holmes' excitement (for why else should Watson have him exclaim 'indeed!') at Watson's response. Clearly Holmes is quite thrilled to find Watson alone.

So thrilled, in fact, that he immediately invites Watson to the Continent, making a particular note that the location does not matter. Holmes surely must know the danger involved, and, having spent at least several months apart from Watson (on the Continent, of all places), Holmes has no real reason to return to London in order to ask Watson to accompany him on holiday. We must therefore suggest that it was Watson's company that Holmes' sought, more so than his aid.

Watson seems quite perplexed by Holmes' invitation, and although he has agreed, his doubt still shows. Again we are witness to Holmes reading Watson's thoughts, for Watson tells us:

He saw the question in my eyes, and, putting his finger-tips together and his elbows upon his knees, he explained the situation.

Such an intimate statement, one must agree, for Holmes could not have seen the question in Watson's eyes were he not gazing into them.

Holmes then sets about introducing Watson to Moriarty (although we will later learn that this conversation took place some years ago, and was added so that Watson

might inform the reader of something he clearly already knew). This brings us to an interesting question: did Moriarty exist?

Holmes becomes quite obsessed with the man, and given that we have not heard a single word of Moriarty before this story, the plausibility of this character comes into question. Several Sherlockians have purported that Moriarty was a mere figment of Holmes' (possibly Watson's) imagination. There are literally dozens of theories surrounded Moriarty, and his existence, but here we will focus on the possibility of Moriarty being a figment of Holmes' imagination.

If Moriarty is a figment of Holmes' imagination, then we must conclude that Holmes has become quite delusional. If this is the case, then we must question why. We have assumed that Watson has been back in Baker Street for some time prior to this story, and we know that during this story he was living away from Baker Street. Is it reasonable to suggest that the shift in Holmes' perception corresponded with Watson once again leaving Baker Street? Or perhaps Holmes' cocaine use came before Watson's leaving, and it was this which drove Watson away? If this is the case, then we must question Holmes' motives. Here we can see only one: that it was Holmes' guilt concerning Watson, and the destruction of Watson's marriage, which led Holmes to misuse his favoured stimulant.

These theories are not impossible, and do present several interesting arguments for the student of subtext.

We return now to the story at hand. Watson, having listened with some horror to Holmes' statement, becomes quite concerned. This is very evident as he tells us:

I had often admired my friend's courage, but never more than now, as he sat quietly checking off a series of incidents which must have combined to make up a day of horror.

In fact, Watson's horror is so great that he immediately invites Holmes to spend the night:

"You will spend the night here?" I said. Watson's statement, despite its question mark, clearly a demanded request.

Holmes, of course, refuses, telling Watson:

"No, my friend, you might find me a dangerous guest."

Holmes obviously places Watson's welfare above his own; Holmes is more than willing to risk his own life, but he will go out of his way to protect his Watson.

Holmes continues, telling Watson that there is nothing more he can do at the present time, and that he therefore intends to take a vacation. Holmes' comment:

"It would be a great pleasure to me, therefore, if you could come on to the Continent with me."

Is quite suggestive, for we must agree that it would indeed be a great pleasure to Holmes to once again have his trusty companion by his side. Holmes is quite open here, speaking directly from his heart, and we have no doubt that Watson was quite aware of it as Watson easily agrees a second time. This pleases Holmes immensely, and he immediately begins imparting his instructions:

"Then these are your instructions, and I beg, my dear Watson, that you will obey them to the letter, for you are now playing a double-handed game with me against the cleverest rogue and the most powerful syndicate of criminals in Europe. Now listen! You will dispatch whatever luggage you intend to take by a trusty messenger unaddressed to Victoria to-night. In the morning you will send for a hansom, desiring your man to take neither the first nor the second which may present itself. Into this hansom you will jump, and you will drive to the Strand end of the Lowther Arcade, handing the address to the cabman upon a slip of paper, with a request that he will not throw it away. Have your fare ready, and the instant that your cab stops, dash through the Arcade, timing yourself to reach the other side at a quarter-past nine. You will find a small brougham waiting close to the curb, driven by a fellow with a heavy black cloak tipped at the collar with red. Into this you will step, and you will reach Victoria in time for the Continental express."

Quite the detailed set of instructions. In fact, it is quite obvious here that Holmes has planned this out exceptionally well (before Watson agreed, no less). This suggests that Holmes knew, before speaking to Watson, that Watson would agree. Truly, Holmes knows his Watson. Watson's loyalty and dependability have never come into question. Nor has Holmes' faith in Watson.

Watson, having agreed to follow Holmes' instructions to the letter, makes one final push to convince Holmes to spend the night. Holmes, of course, declines, leading Watson to state:

It was in vain that I asked Holmes to remain for the evening. It was evident to me that he though he might bring trouble to the roof he was under, and that that was the motive which impelled him to go.

Here we have proof that, indeed, Holmes has refused for fear of bringing Watson harm. Clearly Holmes' desire to protect Watson is far greater than his own personal need for Watson. This selflessness on Holmes' behalf is a clear indication of Holmes' unconditional love for Watson, and yet, we cannot forget that Holmes has requested

Watson's company on the Continent; could it be that Holmes knew Watson was in danger in London, and so desired to get Watson out of the city? Moriarty is indeed a perceptive criminal if he knew to strike at Holmes where Holmes was weakest.

With a few hurried words, Holmes takes his leave, and the next morning Watson makes his way to the train station. Upon arriving, Watson tells us:

My only source of anxiety now was the non-appearance of Holmes.

Watson's worry is quite acute, and we get the sense that he is quite fearful for Holmes' safety. In fact, Watson goes on to say:

A chill of fear had come over me, as I thought that his absence might mean that some blow had fallen during the night.

Clearly Watson is just as concerned for Holmes' well-being as Holmes is for Watson's. The worry and anxiety both men experience (in relation to one another) is quite indicative of their need for one another, and of the importance each plays in the other's life.

Holmes, of course, soon puts Watson out of his misery by announcing his presence. After Watson has recovered from the shock of Holmes' unveiling, Holmes fills Watson in on the events of the evening.

"Have you seen the morning paper, Watson?"

"No."

"You haven't seen about Baker Street, then?"

"Baker Street?"

"They set fire to our rooms last night. No great harm was done."

Recall that Watson is no longer sharing rooms with Holmes in Baker Street, and yet here Holmes clearly refers to them as *our* rooms. Despite Watson's absence, we get the impression that Holmes will forever consider Baker Street Watson's home.

Slowly Holmes and Watson make their way onto the Continent. They have only just arrived in Strasburg when Holmes receives word that Moriarty has escaped the police and is now at large (and likely bent on revenging himself upon Holmes). Holmes is quite disappointed, but his first thought is of Watson's safety, and he suggests that Watson return to England. When Watson requests an explanation, Holmes explains:

"Because you will find me a dangerous companion now. This man's occupation is gone. He is lost if he returns to London. If I read his character right he will devote his whole energies to revenging himself upon me. He said as much in our short interview, and I fancy that he meant it. I should certainly recommend you to return to your practice."

Clearly Holmes cares not for himself, but Watson is a different story. In order to keep Watson safe, Holmes knows that he must dismiss Watson; however loath he is to do it.

Watson, of course, will have none of this, and tells us:

It was hardly an appeal to be successful with one who was an old campaigner as well as an old friend. We sat in the Strasburg salle-à-manger arguing the question for half an hour, but the same night we had resumed our journey and were well on our way to Geneva.

It is quite obvious here that Watson cares deeply for Holmes; so much so that he is willing to disregard his own safety in order to see Holmes through on his journey. That Holmes should argue with Watson is telling, too, for it suggests that Watson was forced to counter Holmes' reservations; a difficult task considering how strong-willed Holmes can be.

Despite the threat hanging over them, Watson quite seems to enjoy their holiday. He tells us:

For a charming week we wandered up the Valley of the Rhone, and then, branching off at Leuk, we made our way over the Gemmi Pass, still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen. It was a lovely trip, the dainty green of the spring below, the virgin white of the winter above...

This description is quite curious, as it reads more like a leisurely honeymoon than a flight from the most dangerous man in the world.

This, of course, brings us to a curious question. Holmes has stated that Moriarty is ruined and is unable to return to London. He has requested that Watson return to London, and yet, would it not be advisable for both men to return to London? If Moriarty's organization is destroyed, then it is apparent that Holmes is in just as much danger traveling as he would be back in Baker Street. The answer for this is quite simple. Holmes knew that Watson would remain on the Continent if Holmes intended to do so, and since returning to London meant returning Watson to Mary, Holmes chose to remain in Europe.

In fact, this theory becomes quite probably when one examines Holmes' mood. Watson tells us:

And yet for all his watchfulness he was never depressed. On the contrary, I can never recollect having seen him in such exuberant spirits.

We are not at all surprised by Holmes' lack of depression, for one can easily imagine that whatever fear and worry overshadowed their trip was more than made up for in

their sharing of tents.

Tents aside, we must succumb to the darkening mood that Holmes refused to acknowledge, for here the story shifts, making us painfully aware of what is to come.

I shall be brief, and yet exact, in the little which remains for me to tell. It is not a subject on which I would willingly dwell, and yet I am conscious that a duty devolves upon me to omit no detail.

Watson's pain here, and indeed, his hurt, is only too apparent. We are acutely aware of Watson's grief, his broken heart, and his hopelessness. It is a mark of Watson's loyalty, and his talent as a biographer, that he is able to rally himself together and complete the story. Still, his words are melancholy, reminding us of the present, and Watson's complete and utter emptiness.

Holmes and Watson arrive in Meiringen, and soon set out for that fateful journey to Reichenbach Falls. Watson is called upon his spurious errand, and yet, he must have sensed what was to come, for he tells us:

As I turned away I saw Holmes, with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of the waters. It was the last that I was ever destined to see of him in this world.

This statement is filled with such regret; such longing, and we know that Watson has once again been reminded of everything he did not say, and everything he did not do.

Despite this sense of foreboding, Watson continues on his path, arriving back in Meiringen, only to discover that he has been deceived. Watson's statement is quite telling:

A look of surprise passed over his face, and at the first quiver of his eyebrows my heart turned to lead in my breast.

Watson, surely aware now of what has come to pass, does not spare his readers the horror he felt at this realization. His words tinged with worry, Watson questions the innkeeper, and then frantically rushes back to the scene.

But I waited for none of the landlord's explanations. In a tingle of fear I was already running down the village street, and making for the path which I had so lately descended. It had taken me an hour to come down. For all my efforts two more had passed before I found myself at the fall of Reichenbach once more. There was Holmes's Alpine-stock still leaning against the rock by which I had left him. But there was no sign of him, and it was in vain that I shouted. My only answer was my own voice reverberating in a rolling echo from the

cliffs around me.

It is so easy to picture Watson here, an expression of shock and horror upon his features as he cast his gaze about and attempted to process the situation. And then, putting the pieces together, he refuses to accept what Holmes would have instantly deduced. He makes his way to the edge and cries out for Holmes, straining to listen and telling himself that Holmes is safe; that Holmes will answer. And then, when no answer comes, Watson's breath would abandon him, and he would have been forced to struggle for air, his chest threatening to crush him under its weight.

It does not end there, for Watson continues:

It was the sight of that Alpine-stock which turned me cold and sick. He had not gone to Rosenlaui, then. He had remained on that three-foot path, with sheer wall on one side and sheer drop on the other, until his enemy had overtaken him. The young Swiss had gone too. He had probably been in the pay of Moriarty, and had left the two men together. And then what had happened? Who was to tell us what had happened then?

Watson's cry of *who was to tell us what had happened?* is so painful to read, for this was Holmes' task; Holmes' job and without Holmes Watson is lost. We begin to see Watson's frantic thought pattern; his refusal to process the likelihood of Holmes' death, and the abject confusion and disorientation which must have accompanied Watson's realization that there was only he.

We can well imagine, too, the feeling of inadequacy Watson must have felt at this realization, for it left him to step into Holmes' shoes and attempt to reconstruct the scene. Watson tells us:

I stood for a minute or two to collect myself, for I was dazed with the horror of the thing. Then I began to think of Holmes's own methods and to try to practice them in reading this tragedy. It was, alas, only too easy to do. During our conversation we had not gone to the end of the path, and the Alpine-stock marked the place where we had stood. The blackish soil is kept forever soft by the incessant drift of spray, and a bird would leave its tread upon it. Two lines of footmarks were clearly marked along the farther end of the path, both leading away from me. There were none returning. A few yards from the end the soil was all ploughed up into a patch of mud, and the branches and ferns which fringed the chasm were torn and bedraggled. I lay upon my face and peered over with the spray spouting up all around me. It had darkened since I left, and now I could only see here and there the glistening of moisture upon the black walls, and far away down at the end of the shaft the gleam of the broken water. I shouted; but only the same half-human cry of the fall was borne back to my ears.

Watson pieces together the scene, despite the horror which dazed him. He makes his obvious conclusion, and yet, despite this, he cannot help but cry out one last time; Watson is not yet ready to give Holmes up for dead.

It is then that Watson spots Holmes' cigarette case, and beneath it a small square of paper:

Unfolding it, I found that it consisted of three pages torn from his note-book and addressed to me.

Incredible, is it not, that Holmes, about to face his nemesis, and in all likelihood his mortality, should think to pause long enough to write a three page letter to Watson. Indeed, Holmes' letter presents several suggestive elements.

My dear Watson,

I write these few lines through the courtesy of Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final discussion of those questions which lie between us.

Holmes has just come up against Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime, and he asks this man's permission to write Watson a letter. Clearly, it is Watson who remains Holmes' priority.

Holmes then goes on to say:

I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you.

Holmes has, on several past occasions, remarked that, save Watson, he has no friends. It is obvious then that this statement is for Watson alone. Holmes knows the cost to Watson, and feels remorse and guilt for it. Truly this is the sign of a man who cares quite deeply.

In fact, this becomes even more evident in Holmes' closing remarks:

Pray give my greetings to Mrs. Watson, and believe me to be, my dear fellow,

Very sincerely yours,

Sherlock Holmes

Holmes does indeed belong to Watson, and here he confirms this. We see too that Holmes signature includes his given name, a gesture of intimacy, for under usual circumstances Watson refers to Holmes only by his last name.

Holmes letter, from its existence to its signature, is quite remarkable, and reminds the reader once again of the bond which existed between Holmes and Watson. No two men were ever closer, and we grieve, not just for the loss of Holmes, but for the loss of

a friendship, and a great love. We share in Watson's pain, and nowhere is this pain more apparent than in Watson's closing remarks:

...upon him whom I shall ever regard as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known.

The Empty House

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Empty House* in April of 1894. Given that Watson tells us that it is an April evening in the spring of 1894, we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in September/October of 1903.

Synopsis:

The Adventure of the Empty House marks the dramatic return of Sherlock Holmes from the long hiatus which followed his death at Reichenbach Falls in the spring of 1891. Dr. John Watson, still grieving the loss of his friend, takes an interest in the mysterious murder of Ronald Adair, but he soon discovers that he is not the only one following the case. His interest in discovering Adair's killer is temporarily forgotten when Watson, seated in his consulting room, finds himself face to face with none other than his long-time friend and companion, Sherlock Holmes. After a brief explanation from Holmes regarding what actually occurred between him and Moriarty, Holmes and Watson find themselves completing a task that began three years prior; Holmes assuming the role of hunter as they take down the last of Moriarty's gang.

The Subtext:

Before we begin with the story itself, we must first examine its place in the chronology, for it is within the chronology that we find our most suggestive elements.

Recall that Holmes first disappeared in the spring of 1891, and that Watson first wrote of his disappearance in *The Final Problem*, which was published in December of 1893. Some four months later, in April of 1894, Holmes returns, and yet Watson waits ten years before publishing the events surrounding Holmes' return. While Watson has suggested that he was obeying Holmes' command, what is curious here is that Watson's return to writing corresponds exactly with Holmes' retirement.

In decoding *The Final Problem*, we noted that Watson spent the Great Hiatus documenting Holmes' cases, which he published in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. We noted, too, that Watson's seeming obsession with publishing Holmes' cases stemmed from Watson's own personal grief (and his inability to recover from Holmes' death).

It is unsurprising, then, that Watson is coping with Holmes' absence (i.e. his retirement) by once again engrossing himself with the consuming task of publishing Holmes' cases. Clearly Watson is unable to live without his Holmes. In fact, one can easily imagine that, with Holmes' retreat to Sussex and bee-keeping, Watson needed something to fill the void Holmes' leaving created.

The crime was of interest in itself, but that interest was as nothing to me compared to the inconceivable sequel, which afforded me the greatest shock and surprise of any event in my adventurous life. Even now, after this long interval, I find myself thrilling as I think of it, and feeling once more that sudden flood of joy, amazement, and incredulity which utterly submerged my mind.

Here we are, ten years after the event occurred, and one cannot help but note the vivid clarity of Watson's statement. That, after all this time, Watson can still conjure this imagine (and, indeed, emotion) and can still name Holmes' return as the greatest shock and surprise of his life is quite remarkable.

Although, perhaps not as remarkable as the statement itself. Here Watson speaks of his joy, amazement and incredulity; of the thrill that has persisted an entire decade. One can easily imagine that Holmes' return marked a drastic change in their relationship. Prior to Holmes' leaving, we had seen the build up of their friendship, the rise of their close intimacy, and then the retreat of their relations corresponding with Watson's marriage.

We next saw their reunion, corresponding with Watson and Mary's separation, and then the collapse of their intimacy as Watson and Mary attempted to reconcile. The Final Problem brought us Holmes' leaving, and Watson's grief. The Empty House brings us Holmes' dramatic return, and we cannot doubt that this return likely corresponded with a renewal of the intimacy which once defined Holmes and Watson's relationship.

It can be imagined that my close intimacy with Sherlock Holmes had interested me deeply in crime, and that after his disappearance I never failed to read with care the various problems which came before the public.

Watson later speaks to his sad bereavement, and it is implied that this corresponds with Mary's passing (although your author has suggested a divorce is also quite possible). We know, then, that Mary's presence in Watson's life ceased to exist at some point between Holmes' death and Holmes' return. We know, too, that Watson has spent Holmes' absence documenting Holmes' cases. Here, Watson admits to following

various crimes and attempting to work them out for himself. It becomes evident, then, that, despite a dying wife (or marital difficulties), a consuming practice, and a demanding writing career, Watson felt the need to fill his hours with work that reminded him of Holmes. Clearly, this lends additional weight to the theory that Watson was unable (unwilling, even) to recover from Holmes' death.

Watson then goes on to tell us of his latest case of interest, making several references to the appeal the case would have held for Holmes. Three years after Holmes' death, and still Watson pines.

This brings us, of course, to Holmes and Watson's first meeting. Watson has arrived at the scene of the crime, and is attempting to gather information. A crowd has gathered, and in its jostling, Watson finds himself colliding with an elderly book collector.

As I did so I struck against an elderly, deformed man, who had been behind me, and I knocked down several books which he was carrying. I remember that as I picked them up, I observed the title of one of them, The Origin of Tree Worship, and it struck me that the fellow must be some poor bibliophile, who, either as a trade or as a hobby, was a collector of obscure volumes. I endeavoured to apologize for the accident, but it was evident that these books which I had so unfortunately maltreated were very precious objects in the eyes of their owner. With a snarl of contempt he turned upon his heel, and I saw his curved back and white side-whiskers disappear among the throng.

While Watson is not yet aware that this man is Holmes in disguise, we cannot doubt that Holmes knew full well who Watson was. One wonders, then, if this was Holmes' attempt to make contact, perhaps in his efforts to decide whether or not he should reveal himself to Watson. We have no doubt that this crossing of paths was arranged by Holmes, and we can speculate that Holmes' leaving was likely not intended; it is easy to imagine that Holmes, face to face with Watson for the first time in three years, would quickly become overwhelmed by his carefully hidden emotions. That he should storm off lest Watson see this vulnerability is quite in keeping with Holmes' character.

Additional subtext can be found in the amusing title of Holmes' book, which brings to mind the worshipping of phallic shaped objects.

Holmes does not remain absent for long, for upon Watson's return to his consulting room he is soon interrupted by the very same book collector. Holmes does not immediately reveal himself, but instead slides into the role of bibliophile. He offers to sell Watson several books, including: *British Birds, and Catullus, and The Holy War—a bargain, every one of them.*

It should be noted that Catullus refers to Gaius Valerius Catullus, a well known and frequently studied Roman poet from the first century, BC. Catullus was known for his erotic poetry, some of which were indicative of his homosexual penchant.

It is this ruse which allows Holmes to convince Watson to turn away, Holmes waiting for Watson to turn his back before shedding his disguise. Watson's reaction, upon first spotting Holmes, is quite telling.

When I turned again, Sherlock Holmes was standing smiling at me across my study table. I rose to my feet, stared at him for some seconds in utter amazement, and then it appears that I must have fainted for the first and the last time in my life.

Remarkable, is it not, that Watson is so overwhelmed by the site of Holmes that he is rendered unconscious. We are, however, quite curious as to why Holmes should have revealed himself in such a manner. We know Holmes delights in surprising Watson, and yet even he must have foreseen what a cruel game he was playing --this on top of his cruelty at having allowed Watson to believe him dead these many years. One wonders if perhaps Holmes' disguise became a physical representation of a mask; if perhaps Holmes was terrified of facing Watson after so many years and so choose to make first contact in armour. The stripping, then, of his protective layer can easily be seen as Holmes' willingness to entrust himself in Watson's hands.

Having decided to reveal himself to Watson, Holmes, too, seems quite overwhelmed by seeing Watson again.

Certainly a gray mist swirled before my eyes, and when it cleared I found my collar-ends undone and the tingling after-taste of brandy upon my lips. Holmes was bending over my chair, his flask in his hand.

Note that Watson tells us that his collar is undone when he comes to, and that his lips are tingling, with Sherlock Holmes bending over his chair. While it is tempting to accept Watson's rendition (that of Holmes reviving his faint friend), the innuendo of this paragraph does not go unnoticed. It speaks, too, to Holmes' need for Watson, for not ten minutes have passed and already he is tearing at Watson's clothing.

Holmes' tactility, while suggestive, is not nearly as suggestive as it would have been were it not for Holmes' candid honesty. Too often Holmes holds himself back, refusing to allow his emotions to surface, and yet, here we see the exact opposite.

"My dear Watson," said the well-remembered voice, "I owe you a thousand apologies. I had no idea that you would be so affected."

While it may seem as though Holmes is apologizing merely for the bruising of

Watson's lips (or Watson's fainting, if one prefers), it is quite easy to propose that this apology runs much deeper. There is a sense of genuineness in its issue that speaks to Holmes having thought out his words very carefully. Clearly, then, Holmes is apologizing, not just for the events which occurred in Watson's consulting room, but for the whole three years of his absence.

I gripped him by the arms.

"Holmes!" I cried. "Is it really you? Can it indeed be that you are alive? Is it possible that you succeeded in climbing out of that awful abyss?"

Holmes' amorous greeting does not appear enough to sustain Watson, for within moments Watson is reaching for Holmes and gripping him by the arms. One can easily imagine that Watson was then forced to bury the desire to draw Holmes close to him once again; Watson still acutely aware of the hour and the distinct lack of privacy their location afforded. Still, the gesture of intimacy does not go unnoticed.

Holmes' of course, does not pull away, but instead questions Watson's well-being.

"Wait a moment," said he. "Are you sure that you are really fit to discuss things? I have given you a serious shock by my unnecessarily dramatic reappearance."

It is quite obvious here that Holmes cares deeply for his Watson, and we sense Holmes' chagrin at having deceived Watson (both in this moment, and at the time of his disappearance). Holmes of old would have been only too excited to share his adventure with Watson, and yet this Holmes appears more concerned with Watson's health and welfare.

Watson, eager to hear Holmes' tale, dismisses Holmes' concern, stating:

"I am all right, but indeed, Holmes, I can hardly believe my eyes. Good heavens! To think that you—you of all men—should be standing in my study." Again I gripped him by the sleeve, and felt the thin, sinewy arm beneath it. "Well, you're not a spirit, anyhow," said I. "My dear chap, I'm overjoyed to see you."

It is clear in Watson's excitement that he has envisioned this moment before, Watson undoubtedly spending several months (if not years) picturing Holmes walking into his study. We cannot know how long Watson remained in the denial phase of his grief, and yet, here we are certain that Watson is likely recalling those past incidences and wondering whether the Holmes before him is a figment of his imagination.

Again Watson is forced to reach out and touch Holmes (partly, one can imagine, to prove to himself that Holmes is indeed standing before him, but partly, one would wager, because Watson was incapable of stopping himself from initiating this physical

contact).

Watson then goes on to ask how Holmes came to be alive from that dreadful chasm. Holmes, perhaps dreading the inevitable explanation, attempts to stall by mentioning the night's work. Their conversation, one must agree, is quite interesting:

"You'll come with me to-night?"

"When you like and where you like."

"This is, indeed, like the old days."

Curious, is it not, that Holmes' first thought should be to secure Watson's companionship for the night's work. Clearly Holmes knows that he has wronged Watson, and clearly Holmes is concerned that Watson might take the news rather badly. That Holmes' only thought is to secure Watson's company is quite telling.

So, too, is Watson's response, for he clearly tells Holmes that he is at Holmes' disposal. That Watson should not question Holmes' intended plans is quite indicative of Watson's need to once again spend time in Holmes' presence --he quite literally cares not where and when, or even what the night might hold; Holmes' presence is all that matters. Finally, Holmes' final comment, that it is, indeed, like the old days, is quite touching, and one can easily imagine that Holmes has spent these past three years longing for the days of old.

Having secured Watson's cooperation, Holmes is left to tell Watson of his staged death and disappearance. Note, however, that Holmes first tells Watson:

"My note to you was absolutely genuine."

It is quite obvious here that Holmes feels remorse (and, indeed, guilt) for having deceived Watson. By telling Watson that his note was genuine (that Holmes did indeed ask Moriarty's permission to write it) is in essence Holmes' attempt to apologize. He hopes that in reminding Watson of the intimacy he shared in the letter that Watson might appreciate the gesture enough to forgive Holmes for Watson's grief.

Holmes does not stop there, however, as, having told his tale, he remarks:

"I had only one confidant--my brother Mycroft. I owe you many apologies, my dear Watson..."

Again Holmes is driven to apologize, a remarkable feat for a man such as Holmes. Clearly, this is evidence of Holmes' guilt. Holmes knows he has risked Watson's friendship and the thought of losing Watson permanently is quite despairing. Holmes wishes nothing more than to make amends.

So much so, in fact, that Holmes goes on to say:

Several times during the last three years I have taken up my pen to write to you, but always I feared lest your affectionate regard for me should tempt you to some indiscretion which would betray my secret.

While this may seem slightly insulting (that Watson would betray Holmes' secret), Holmes cannot doubt that Watson would be unable to sit idly by without attempting to contact Holmes. Holmes knows too well the depth of Watson's emotions, and this becomes even more evident when we examine Holmes' acknowledgment of how often he thought of contacting Watson. If Holmes felt compelled to contact Watson, we cannot doubt that Watson would feel the same, but, whereas Holmes' restraint is quite well honed, we cannot say the same for Watson's.

We must turn now from the story in order to address a curious question posed by numerous scholars concerning Holmes' true whereabouts during the Great Hiatus. Recall that Holmes tells us:

I traveled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhasa, and spending some days with the head Llama. You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian named Sigerson, but I am sure that it never occurred to you that you were receiving news of your friend. I then passed through Persia, looked in at Mecca, and paid a short but interesting visit to the Khalifa at Khartoum, the results of which I have communicated to the Foreign Office. Returning to France, I spent some months in a research into the coal-tar derivatives, which I conducted in a laboratory at Montpellier, in the south of France.

Immediately we begin to see several problems with Holmes' statement. To begin with, there is not a head Llama (unless Holmes was in Chile herding llamas), but rather a head Lama. While this can be chalked up to a misprint, one wonders if perhaps Watson, in writing what he knew was an obvious lie, could not bring himself to show disrespect to the Lama by including reference to his title in this story.

Then there is Holmes' reference to Mecca, a city in Saudi Arabia (then part of Persia) which forbids entry to non Muslims. While it is possibly that Holmes entered in disguise, Holmes would have known that discovery would mean certain death. Without a case to drive him, one cannot see Holmes' journeying to a city which might cost him his life for no other reason than wanting a mere glance.

Even Holmes' visits to Khartoum and Montpellier have been brought into question (Khartoum was all but destroyed at the time of the Great Hiatus, and to research coal-tar derivatives is a rather meaningless statement). In fact, the hiatus has generated

numerous theories regarding Holmes' true activities, Sherlockians going so far as to suggest that Holmes spent the hiatus: married, living in America, hidden in London, and overcoming his cocaine addiction --indeed, one such theory has Holmes cloning himself and sending his clone back to London while he went on to do his real work in Russia.

Whatever the theory, the question remains: Is Holmes' statement regarding his whereabouts during the Great Hiatus plausible? The answer is invariably, no.

This may seem unimportant to the student of subtext, and yet here we suggest that it is, in fact, extremely important. Allow us to examine the evidence which contradicts Holmes' statement, and demonstrate how this evidence suggests that Holmes and Watson's relationship was anything but platonic.

Watson, during his first reunion with Holmes, makes particular note of the *dead-white tinge in his aquiline face which told me that his life recently had not been a healthy one*.

Holmes has told us that he has passed the last three years traveling in the east; namely Tibet, Persia (the area now largely known as Iran and Saudi Arabia) and Egypt, before settling in France. Above, Watson clearly refers to a dead-white tinge in Holmes' complexion. Surely this is not a man who has spent several years traveling out of doors under the hot sun of the Middle and Far East.

In fact, Holmes' complexion is more in keeping with a man who has spent the bulk of three years indoors, heading outside only under the weight of wigs and makeup. This is quite suggestive, and lends weight to the theory that Holmes was, indeed, in London.

Then there is Holmes' statement that Moran had *been a witness of his friend's death and of my escape*. If this is the case, then why should Holmes have continued with his plan to disappear? Holmes had previously stated that *if all the world was convinced that I was dead they would take liberties, these men, they would soon lay themselves open, and sooner or later I could destroy them*.

Having carried out his plan only to be discovered by one of the very men that Holmes' wished to deceive should have immediately negated Holmes' plan. Why then, one must ask, did Holmes feel compelled to carry out his staged death? Holmes' explanation for leaving is completely illogical.

While it is entirely possible that Holmes did intend to stage his own death, it is reasonable to assume that Holmes dismissed this plan shortly after his confrontation with

Moran. This would be the logical conclusion, and it lends weight to the theory that Holmes' did not, in fact, travel to Tibet and Persia.

There is, however, ample evidence to suggest that Holmes did spend the hiatus hiding in London (likely hoping that Moran would let his guard down if he thought Holmes was away from the city --and where else but London could Holmes have monitored Moran's movements?).

There is also evidence to suggest that Holmes spent this time in Baker Street, venturing out only in disguise, for Holmes later tells us that Mycroft had looked after his rooms. We know Mycroft to be particularly lazy, and so it is exceedingly difficult to picture him leaving his "track" in order to maintain and repair the fire damaged rooms in Baker Street.

Alternative, we might also suggest that Holmes maintained a disguise throughout his time in London, and that he was, and always had been, the old book seller who claimed to be *a neighbour of yours, for you'll find my little bookshop at the corner of Church Street*. What better way to keep an eye on (i.e. stalk) Watson than to take up residence a few doors down from Watson's practice?

Further evidence to suggest that Holmes remained in London can be found later in the story, when Holmes scolds Lestrade for having three unsolved murders in one year, suggesting that Holmes has been on hand to witness the going-ons of Scotland Yard. There is also the curious question of how Holmes managed to arrive in the city so quickly after Adair's death. And the question of how Holmes came to know of Watson's sad bereavement.

If we accept this evidence, and assume that Holmes was living in London, then the only question which remains is whether or not Watson knew of Holmes' whereabouts.

Throughout this decoding we have assumed that Watson did not, in fact, know that Holmes was alive, and if this is the case, then we must question why Holmes chose not to reveal himself to Watson. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Holmes' deceit stemmed from his desire to distance himself from a still married Watson. This will tie in with our later theory, which suggests that the timing of Holmes' unveiling to correspond with Watson's bereavement is not mere coincidence.

There is, however, some evidence to suggest that Watson did know of Holmes' whereabouts. It is entirely possible that, having escaping from Moran, Holmes made his way back to their hotel in Meiringen, where he stole in through the window of Watson's

room and woke Watson from a fitful, sorrow-filled sleep. Watson, incredulous, but delighted, would have listened eagerly to Holmes' instructions; Holmes sending Watson ahead to London in order to arrange their rooms in Baker Street and prepare Mrs. Hudson for what was to come.

Then, some weeks later, Holmes would arrive in disguise, taking up his old residence while Watson appeared, to all the world, a man mired in grief. Watson penned his stories, building public interest in Sherlock Holmes (whom would seem fictional to most, for he was never seen or heard from in London). Finally, knowing they were close, Holmes had Watson chronicle his death, Holmes hoping that Watson's conclusion would convince Moran that Holmes had vanished for good.

While the above scenario may seem fantastic, it is neither impossible, nor improbable. In fact, it is the only explanation which explains Watson's eagerness to forgive what, to most, would be an unforgivable act.

Regardless of the theory we accept, both prove of interest to the student of subtext, for in one Holmes orchestrates his death in order to escape the temptation that is his married friend, and in the other Watson and Holmes spend three years closeted away in Baker Street, occupying their time as best they could.

"So it was, my dear Watson, that at two o'clock to-day I found myself in my old armchair in my own old room, and only wishing that I could have seen my old friend Watson in the other chair which he has so often adorned."

Returning to the story at hand, we cannot help but remark here Holmes' desire to have Watson by his side. There is an obvious sense of longing here, and one wonders, if indeed Holmes and Watson were separated for three long years, how often Holmes found himself wishing for Watson's companionship. We know Watson's grief led to a consuming obsession, but it is here that we first note the depth of Holmes' loss; for despite knowing Watson's whereabouts, we cannot doubt that Holmes missed his Watson.

In some manner he had learned of my own sad bereavement, and his sympathy was shown in his manner rather than in his words.

We have touched on this above, and yet it warrants a closer examination, for here we are presented with a rather interesting theory regarding the reasons for Holmes' return (unveiling). Curious, is it not, that Holmes should return to London (and Watson's side) upon Mary's death (or leaving, for we have suggested that Watson is covering here for Mary's abandonment and their eventual divorce). One cannot help but wonder if it

was the change in Watson's marital status which led Holmes to reveal himself.

If, however, Watson was aware of Holmes' whereabouts during the hiatus, then we have further evidence to suggest a divorce, for here we can suggest that Mary's leaving corresponded with Watson's frequent absence (for we cannot doubt that Watson spent the bulk of his time seeing to Holmes' needs in Baker Street).

It was indeed like old times when, at that hour, I found myself seated beside him in a hansom, my revolver in my pocket, and the thrill of adventure in my heart.

If we accept Watson's narrative and assume that Watson knew not of Holmes' presence in London, then the above statement is quite suggestive, for it is obvious here that whatever residual resentment Holmes' deceit created has obviously vanished. Watson, claiming his rightful place at Holmes' side, is once again able to feel the thrill of excitement he once associated with Holmes (and, indeed, tried so often to capture in the writing of Holmes' cases). Watson has clearly fallen in love, all over again, and we cannot doubt that it was in this instance that Watson fully forgave Holmes.

Holmes's cold, thin fingers closed round my wrist and led me forward down a long hall, until I dimly saw the murky fanlight over the door.

The pair arrive in Camden House, and here we cannot help but question whether Holmes' tactility was a direct result of his concern for Watson, or whether Holmes was merely taking advantage of an opportunity to initiate physical contact.

There was no lamp near, and the window was thick with dust, so that we could only just discern each other's figures within. My companion put his hand upon my shoulder and his lips close to my ear.

It is perhaps during their brief stay in the empty house across from Baker Street that presents the most vivid sense of intimacy. The above scene is practically pornographic; Watson only able to discern Holmes' figure in the darkness from his proximity, and then the added weight of Holmes' touch, followed by the warm breath of Holmes' words at Watson's ear. There is such incredible energy in the above passage; indeed, one cannot help but shiver at its implications.

Holmes, whispering in Watson's ear, asks if Watson knows where they are. Watson acknowledges that they are looking out across Baker Street, to which Holmes replies:

"Exactly. We are in Camden House, which stands opposite to our own old quarters."

Note that Holmes again refers to Baker Street as *our own* quarters. In fact, within the span of minutes, he will again refer to them as *our old rooms*. This lends additional weight to the theory that Holmes has been staying in London, but also suggests

that Watson was unaware of Holmes' presence. Either way, it is quite remarkable that Holmes should refer to Baker Street as though it were still his and Watson's home.

Having established their location, Holmes then asks Watson to move towards the window and glance into their old sitting room. Holmes states:

"We will see if my three years of absence have entirely taken away my power to surprise you."

There is a decide note of mischief in Holmes' tone here, and we are instantly reminded of the excitement Holmes derives from astonishing Watson. Watson brings out the boy in Holmes; and a more clear indication of love does not exist.

Watson does as instructed, and finds himself staring up at Holmes' silhouette.

It was a perfect reproduction of Holmes. So amazed was I that I threw out my hand to make sure that the man himself was standing beside me. He was quivering with silent laughter.

"Well?" said he.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "It is marvellous."

"I trust that age doth not wither nor custom stale my infinite variety," said he, and I recognized in his voice the joy and pride which the artist takes in his own creation.

Note here that Watson uses his amazement as an excuse to reach across and grope Holmes. Indeed, one might question if Holmes' quivering had anything to do with silent laughter. Then there is Holmes' pride and joy; two keen emotions which he readily shares with Watson and expresses by quoting from Shakespeare's Cleopatra and Antony (a statement, ironically, intended to describe a woman and her charms).

In silence we stood together in the darkness and watched the hurrying figures who passed and repassed in front of us.

The above is a familiar scene, and speaks to their unchanging relationship; regardless of their time apart, they find equilibrium. That they can take solace and comfort in silence is a testament to the bond between them.

In the midst of this silence, Watson spots two men on the street below and feels compelled to point them out to Holmes. Holmes' reaction, one must admit, is quite amusing.

I tried to draw my companion's attention to them; but he gave a little ejaculation of impatience, and continued to stare into the street.

Given the exceedingly length of their wait, it does not come as a surprise that Holmes was unable to wait until he had Watson secured, and alone, in Baker Street.

This one indiscretion, however, proves not to be enough, for Watson soon tells us:

An instant later he pulled me back into the blackest corner of the room, and I felt his warning hand upon my lips. The fingers which clutched me were quivering. Never had I known my friend more moved, and yet the dark street still stretched lonely and motionless before us.

We shall allow the implications of this paragraph speak for themselves. Your author will, however, cheerfully point out the obviousness of Holmes dragging Watson into a darkened corner, then touching Watson's lips, then becoming so moved that his fingers quivered.

Sadly, the boys are interrupted by the arrival of Colonel Moran. Moran is not aware of their presence, and so is quite surprised when Holmes springs his trap and has the man arrested. It is here that we find Holmes quoting from yet another of Shakespeare's plays, Holmes stating:

"Journeys end in lovers' meetings", and we cannot doubt that Holmes is now anticipating his and Watson's return to Baker Street. Their case has ended, and there is nothing left save for the pair to return to Baker Street and reacquaint themselves with one another.

Holmes makes his intentions even more obvious when, having handed Moran over to the police, Holmes states:

"And now, Watson, if you can endure the draught from a broken window, I think that half an hour in my study over a cigar may afford you some profitable amusement."

Oh, my.

Sadly, Holmes and Watson arrive to find Mrs. Hudson in their old rooms. Holmes recovers quickly, making small chat before telling Watson:

"And now, Watson, let me see you in your old seat once more, for there are several points which I should like to discuss with you."

We cannot doubt that, the second Mrs. Hudson left, Holmes, perhaps first pausing to admire the sight of Watson in his chair, immediately pulled Watson to his feet and dragged him into the bedroom.

And then, sometime later, Holmes, clad in his dressing gown, filled Watson in on the details of the case as the two sat and relaxed over a well earned cigar; Holmes and Watson once again ensconced in Baker Street, with Holmes once again *free to devote his life to examining those interesting little problems which the complex life of London so plentifully presents.*

The Golden Pince-Nez

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez in November of 1894. Watson confirms this date; although he does set it later in the month than Baring-Gould. Oddly, The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez is the only story Baring-Gould dates in the year of Holmes' return. This occurs despite Watson's reference to three manuscripts worth of cases. The story was first published in July of 1904.

Synopsis:

One dreary night near the close of November, Inspector Stanley Hopkins arrives in Baker Street to present Sherlock Holmes with the details of a most curious murder. Aside from having no suspect, Scotland Yard is also unable to determine a motive, leading Hopkins to seek Holmes' aid in solving the case. Holmes agrees, and he and Watson set out with Hopkins for Yoxley Old Place, where Holmes investigates the death of Professor Coram's secretary, Willoughby Smith. The solution, however, is far more extraordinary than anyone would have suspected. Armed only with a delicate pair of gold framed glasses, Holmes is able to deduce a description of the woman they are searching for. Armed only with the ash of several imported cigarettes, Holmes does better still, locating the woman within the house where the murder took place.

The Subtext:

It was a wild, tempestuous night towards the close of November. Holmes and I sat together in silence all the evening, he engaged with a powerful lens deciphering the remains of the original inscription upon a palimpsest, I deep in a recent treatise upon surgery.

So begins The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez, and here we are presented with several points of interest. First, there is Watson's reference to the date. The reader will recall that Baring-Gould dates the story in 1894, and that this is the only case which appears during this year. The reader will also recall that Holmes returned to London (and practice) in April of that year. As Watson tells us that Holmes was quite busy during this year, one cannot help but wonder why only one case was put forward. It is your author's opinion that Holmes was far less consumed by his practice than he had been in past years (undoubtedly due to the public assumption that he was dead) and so

Holmes and Watson passed the year reacquainting themselves with one another. This likely occurred within the confines of Baker Street; indeed, in all probability, the pair never left Holmes' bedroom.

Then there is Watson's reference to their activities. Note that Holmes and Watson pass the time in companionable silence, each engaged in his own activities. This picture of domestic life is quite telling, for it hints at familiarity, bringing to mind an established marriage; Holmes and Watson clearly comfortable enough in one another's company to pass the time without the need for conversation. Clearly, their summer-long reunion did wonders to restore the foundation of their relationship.

"Well, Watson, it's as well we have not to turn out to-night," said Holmes, laying aside his lens and rolling up the palimpsest.

Holmes soon grows weary of his work, and, setting it aside for another day, remarks to Watson that it is too dreary a night to head out of doors. The innuendo in this statement is staggering, for one instantly anticipates Holmes' next suggestion; that they should retire to bed and while away the dreary evening as best they can.

Sadly, Holmes' plans are for naught, for soon they are interrupted by the arrival of Inspector Hopkins. Watson, we shall see, is quite perturbed by this, for he was rather looking forward to spending some 'quality' time with his Holmes.

The cab which I had seen had pulled up at our door.

"What can he want?" I ejaculated, as a man stepped out of it.

Holmes seems to sense Watson's frustration, and indeed, finds it quite amusing, for he sends Watson down to answer the door, stating:

"Run down, my dear fellow, and open the door, for all virtuous folk have been long in bed."

Clearly Holmes does not include Watson or himself amongst the virtuous folk. Perhaps more telling is the obvious implication that Holmes and Watson have reached a place in their relationship where Holmes is no longer afraid to poke fun at their 'deviant' behaviour.

Hopkins' arrival marks the beginning of his tale, and the case. As Hopkins begins to describe the events which brought him to Baker Street in spite of the dismal weather, Watson tells us:

The wind howled and screamed at the windows. Holmes and I drew closer to the fire while the young inspector slowly and point by point developed his singular narrative.

While the above paragraph seems quite benign, one cannot help but picture Holmes

and Watson drawing nearer to the fire, and one another, the coldness of the night ever present in the screaming of the wind, with Holmes and Watson each longing for the warm embrace of their shared bed, and their tangled limbs.

Hopkins, however, is oblivious to their longing, and continues his narrative, telling Holmes of the mysterious murder of Mr. Smith before describing the setting and household of Yoxley Old Place. Halfway through, he produces a diagram of the rooms involved, which he then hands to Holmes so that Holmes might spread it out across his knee. Note here Watson's actions, for they are quite suspicious.

I rose, and, standing behind Holmes, I studied it over his shoulder.

Oh, Watson; risking such public exposure so that you might initiate contact. Oddly enough, it is usually Holmes who seeks out excuses to lean over Watson. Clearly this role reversal can be seen as evidence of their intimacy; they have adopted one another's habits, as most established couples do.

Hopkins finishes his strange narrative, before suggesting that Holmes come around to Yoxley Old Place in the morning. This leaves Holmes in the very disagreeable position of having to offer over the sofa to Hopkins so that they might leave upon the first train. One can easily imagine that Holmes passed a rather sleepless night that evening, for in addition to the excitement of a new case, Holmes was forced to sleep, perhaps for the first time in months, alone.

The night passes quickly, and come morning the trio set out for Yoxley Old Place. Their trip is uneventful and, upon their arrival, Holmes finds himself investigating the crime in earnest. Using his usual methods, Holmes examines the scene and devises several theories. The testing of these theories, however, takes some time, and so, in order to pass the time, Holmes and Watson spend their morning engaged in recreational activities.

We loitered the morning away in the garden.

The above sentence paints quite the romantic image. One can almost picture Holmes and Watson strolling arm in arm through the garden, perhaps pausing every so often to admire the flora. It is entirely possible that the pair found a bench, perhaps in a secluded part of the garden, where they might sit, hip to hip, and merely enjoy one another's company.

Sadly, their moment alone is interrupted by the arrival of afternoon, and Holmes, ever a professional, immediately sets his mind to solving the case. He announces his intention to seek out the professor, and, upon arriving in the professor's rooms, Watson

tells us:

When we rose again I observed that Holmes's eyes were shining and his cheeks tinged with colour. Only at a crisis have I seen those battle-signals flying.

It is quite evident here that, despite the increased intimacy of their relationship, Watson is still very much taken with Holmes; Watson still drawn to seek out and categorize Holmes' eyes. That Watson knows Holmes well enough to recognize Holmes' mood merely from a shift in his expression is telling, too, as it provides additional evidence for an increased intimacy of their relationship.

From here the story quickly approaches its resolution, and it is interesting to note that, while the story is not as subtextually heavy as some of Watson's other cases, it does mark a pivotal moment in their relationship. With Holmes' return, and Mary's death (leaving), Holmes and Watson's intimacy has blossomed; so much so that the pair demonstrate all outward signs of being a happily married couple. The tension between them has lessened, and they are clearly quite comfortable with one another's company. The angst which once permeated every aspect of their friendship has vanished, and in its place remains only the confidence which comes with a long-standing, and secure, relationship.

The Three Students

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Three Students* in April of 1895. This is the second case to appear after Holmes' return (according to Baring-Gould's chronology) and it is interesting to note that it occurs exactly one year after *The Empty House*. Watson confirms Baring-Gould's year, but does not mention a month. Baring-Gould argues that the case occurs at a term end (given the fact that an exam is being written) and suggests the spring term as it corresponds with the hour the sun sets during the story. The story was first published in June of 1904.

Synopsis:

Holmes and Watson find themselves studying in a famous university town when tragedy strikes at one of the local colleges. Mr. Hilton Soames, a tutor and lecturer at St. Luke's College, has discovered that one of his students has examined, and very likely made notes of, an exam proof which was resting upon his desk. Eager to avoid scandal, Soames seeks out Holmes' aid, hoping that Holmes will correctly deduce which of the students has cheated so that Soames will not be forced to cancel the examination. Holmes does exactly that, the solution contingent on a pencil, a scratch mark, and a small triangle of blackish clay.

The Subtext:

It was in the year '95 that a combination of events, into which I need not enter, caused Mr. Sherlock Holmes and myself to spend some weeks in one of our great University towns.

So begins *The Adventure of the Three Students*, and it is quite curious that Watson should allude to such a mysterious affair. Indeed, we cannot say what has brought Holmes and Watson to this great University town (or, rather, what has driven them from London). The above paragraph, however, lends itself well to speculation.

This speculation is not without its subtextual highlights. Indeed, we might go so far as to suggest that Holmes and Watson's intensifying relationship brought about a need to escape the public eye. They might very well have chosen to leave London in hopes of stilling rumours before they became widely known. While this may be the least plausible of explanation, it is still not impossible, and so we must consider it. Regardless, the

image of Holmes and Watson, sharing temporary rooms in a University town which buzzed with the thrill of academia, is not in the least unpleasant.

We were residing at the time in furnished lodgings close to a library where Sherlock Holmes was pursuing some laborious researches in early English charters.

It would appear, however, that, according to Watson, Holmes' desire to spend time in this University town was limited to these charters. If this is the case, then we cannot quite grasp why Watson's presence was needed. Indeed, if this vacation from London was indeed scholarly in nature, then one must confess that Watson's presence is quite unusual. Clearly, Holmes is unwilling (perhaps even unable) to live without his Watson.

Indeed, Watson tells us:

My friend's temper had not improved since he had been deprived of the congenial surroundings of Baker Street. Without his scrap-books, his chemicals, and his homely untidiness, he was an uncomfortable man.

Holmes is a creature of habit, and so despises being away from his things. Despite this, it has clearly been some time since they have left Baker Street, and yet, Holmes seems to be surviving without his objects of comfort. One wonders, then, if Watson's presence came at Holmes' insistence, as perhaps Holmes knew that he could vacate Baker Street so long as Watson accompanied him.

The arrival of Mr. Soames, a lecturer and tutor at St. Luke's College, marks the start of the case, and, after listening to Mr. Soames tale, Holmes seems quite thrilled to find that the case presents quite the intellectual puzzle. He immediately agrees to help, and soon Holmes and Watson find themselves heading over to the college.

Holmes quickly begins his investigation, and, upon entering Mr. Soames bedroom, remarks upon a very obvious hiding place. As he approaches it, Watson tells us:

As Holmes drew the curtain I was aware, from some little rigidity and alertness of his attitude, that he was prepared for an emergency.

Again and again, throughout the Canon, we have been witness to the connection between Holmes and Watson. We see it again here, Watson's awareness of Holmes far too acute for a mere friend and biographer.

Holmes' investigation quickly draws to a temporary conclusion; Holmes announcing that he will retire for the evening and return the next morning. The walk back to their lodgings is passed in companionable conversation, until, of course, Holmes notices the late hour.

“By Jove! My dear fellow, it is nearly nine, and the landlady babbled of green peas at seven-thirty. What with your eternal tobacco, Watson, and your irregularity at meals, I expect that you will get notice to quit and that I shall share your downfall”.

Amusing, is it not, that Holmes should tease Watson so. While this can be dismissed as mere banter, one wonders if perhaps some of Holmes’ habits have rubbed off on Watson. Clearly they have spent a large portion of time in one another’s company; it is not unreasonable to suggest that they would have adopted one another’s idiosyncrasies.

Ignoring this theory, Holmes’ comment is still quite telling, for such banter and teasing speaks to the affectionate bond which existed between the two men. Holmes’ playfulness here brings to mind the image of a man very much in love, and very much at ease with his long-standing lover and partner.

The pair eventually return to their rooms, where they partake in a late supper. The next morning sees Holmes up and out before the break of dawn. Watson later tells us:

At eight in the morning he came into my room just as I finished my toilet.

Curious, is it not, that Watson should attempt such an obvious lie. While we have no doubt that they rented double rooms so as to keep up appearances, it is highly unlikely that Watson could have claimed his own.

That being said, it is interesting to note that Holmes’ first thought, upon returning to the rooms, was to seek Watson out so that he might be there are the climax of the case.

Indeed, Holmes even goes so far as to suggest that they skip breakfast in order to head back to the college and complete the case. There, Holmes, with the aid of a bluff, is quickly able to unravel the whole of the mystery, and all that remains is for Holmes and Watson to return home for breakfast.

“No, indeed,” said Holmes, heartily, springing to his feet. “Well, Soames, I think we have cleared your little problem up, and our breakfast awaits us at home. Come, Watson!”

While not Baker Street, it is quite evident that Holmes subscribes to the old adage: Home is, indeed, where the heart is.

Addendum:

Decoding subtext is not by any means an exact science, and so it is natural that the occasional piece of information should be overlooked. Many thanks to Alexa D., who was kind enough to fill in several blanks.

The reader will recall that we mentioned above possible motives for Holmes and Watson's retreat from London. We suggested that it was entirely possible that Holmes and Watson wished to escape from the public eye in order to avoid having their intensifying relationship become common knowledge.

Recall that Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Three Students* on April 5/6, 1895. It is interesting to note, and here we must once again thank Alexa for bringing the event to my attention, that Oscar Wilde was arrested on April 6, 1895 for gross indecency. Thus began the Oscar Wilde trial which saw him spend two years in prison for his homosexuality. Alexa also pointed out that it was shortly after Wilde's arrest that homosexual men and women began fleeing England for France.

Is it too much to assume, then, that Holmes, given his connection with Scotland Yard, would have heard of Wilde's impending arrest before hand, and that he therefore would have decided that a retreat from the city might be in order? Holmes and Watson could have not have gone to France without arising suspicion, and yet they are conveniently absent from London when Wilde's arrest occurs. Out of sight, out of mind, perhaps?

The Solitary Cyclist

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist* in April of 1895, some few days after *The Adventure of the Three Students*. Watson confirms this date, and so we have no reason to question the story's place in Baring-Gould's chronology. *The Solitary Cyclist* was first published in December of 1903.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes is engaged by a very abstruse and complicated problem when he is interrupted by the arrival of Miss Violet Smith. Miss Smith's father died years ago, leaving her and her mother penniless and alone. Her father's brother is known to be somewhere in Africa, but aside from that they have neither kith nor kin living. Imagine her surprise, then, when Miss Smith spots an advertisement in the paper inquiring into her whereabouts. Thinking she has come into an inheritance, Miss Smith responds to the advertisement, only to learn that two of her (supposedly deceased) uncle's friends are looking to offer her a job as governess at a fee well above the market price. Miss Smith accepts, but soon grows uneasy with her decision. In addition to her employer (Mr. Carruthers)'s seeming interest, she is forced to contend with Mr. Carruthers' brute of a friend, Mr. Woodley, and his advances. It is not, however, until a strange, bearded man begins following Miss Smith on her bicycle that she decides to seek the aid of Sherlock Holmes.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist marks the fourth story to appear in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, and it is quite apparent in this story that Watson's writing has matured. Gone is the man uncertain and in constant need of Holmes' approval. Gone, too, are the overt romanticisms over which Holmes has so often scolded his Watson. Watson's writing has mellowed, and one gets the sense that Watson has truly come into his own. There is a confidence in his words; a distinct lack of the neediness which often bled into his early work. It is curious that this should correspond with Holmes' retirement.

At the time of this story's publication, Holmes and Watson had known one another

some twenty-three years. Twenty-three years, and with the close of their professional partnership (though we will later demonstrate that Holmes' retirement did not sever their personal relationship) we see a Watson confident in himself, and secure in his relationship with Holmes. This is very indicative of an established relationship, and so it is not hard to imagine that, despite their rough and often confused start, Holmes and Watson spent their latter years devoted solely to one another.

Her [Miss Smith] visit was, I remember, extremely unwelcome to Holmes, for he was immersed at the moment in a very abstruse and complicated problem concerning the peculiar persecution to which John Vincent Harden, the well known tobacco millionaire, had been subjected.

Watson has told us that this case takes place some few days after The Adventure of the Three Students, and the reader will undoubtedly recall that Holmes and Watson were away from Baker Street in the story. And yet, above we note that Holmes appears to be submersed in an existing case. Curious, is it not, that Holmes should begin a case so soon after arriving back in Baker Street. While this may lead us to question Baring-Gould's chronology, or indeed, to suggest that John Harden's case somehow involved those charters Holmes was researching in a famous University town, we soon discover that Watson has given us our answer.

My friend, who loved above all things precision and concentration of thought, resented anything which distracted his attention from the matter in hand.

Note that Watson does not say *at hand*. Indeed, he is very particular to suggest that Holmes' problem is *in hand*. This is quite telling, for we can automatically discount Watson's excuse and suggest that Holmes' lack of interest in Miss Smith's case stemmed not from an existing case, but rather from the activities that Miss Smith's arrival interrupted. Indeed, it is quite surprising that Watson, who so often finds himself in Holmes' capable hands, should not have objected as well.

Despite Holmes' unwelcome, Miss Smith's manner is so assertive that he cannot help but grant her request. Before listening to her tale, however, he first notes that she is in good health and comments, much to her surprise, on her being an ardent bicyclist.

She glanced down in surprise at her own feet, and I observed the slight roughening of the side of the sole caused by the friction of the edge of the pedal.

Here we cannot help but note Watson's progression. It is quite evident that he is beginning to master Holmes' methods. One can imagine the pride Holmes must have felt, knowing that his instruction had brought Watson to this point. Watson, too, ap-

pears rather pleased with his deduction.

With Miss Smith's confirmation that she is, indeed, a cyclist, Holmes continues with his deductions. Here Watson tells us:

My friend took the lady's ungloved hand, and examined it with as close an attention and as little sentiment as a scientist would show to a specimen.

The reader will recall that Watson has twice mentioned the beauty of their new client, and yet Holmes remains as detached as ever. While Holmes is not known for his liking of the female sex, he is always chivalrous. Here he is less so, and so it becomes quite evident that Holmes only has eyes for Watson.

Their conversation continues, until Miss Smith has occasion to mention that she is from Farnham. Holmes' comment, one will agree, is quite amusing.

"A beautiful neighbourhood, and full of the most interesting associations. You remember, Watson, that it was near there that we took Archie Stamford, the forger."

Interesting, is it not, that Holmes should refer to a neighbourhood which he associates with Watson as beautiful. One wonders if perhaps Holmes and Watson had occasion to take a vacation in the region.

The above statement gives way to Miss Smith's narrative. She tells Holmes of her deceased father, and her estranged uncle, and then briefly mentions a man by the name of Cyril.

"Oh, Cyril is his name!" said Holmes, smiling.

We soon learn that Cyril is Miss Smith's fiancé, and it is quite interesting to note that Holmes was aware of this long before hearing the man's name (indeed, before he even knew the man existed). Clearly Holmes recognized a woman in love, and clearly this was not mere deduction (for Holmes would not have known what to look for were he unfamiliar with love). We must therefore suggest that Holmes saw here a reflection of himself. This is quite evident in the smile he gives Miss Smith; indeed, it is evident in his teasing tone, too. Holmes communicates to Miss Smith as one love-struck soul to another.

This, of course, brings us to an interesting theory. Several scholars have suggested that the Holmes who returned from the hiatus was not the Holmes who vanished with Moriarty over Reichenbach Falls. Some scholars have even gone so far as to suggest that the Holmes who returned was, in fact, an impostor. Ignoring this possibility, the most common theories used to explain Holmes' changed behaviour (and, indeed, we do see a more open and surprisingly more mellow Holmes in the later Canon) take into

consideration Holmes' travels in Tibet and his freedom from cocaine. While each of these theories sits within the realm of the probable, it is your author's suggestion that it was not Holmes' travels, or his abandonment of cocaine, or even the passage of time which changed Holmes, but rather, that it was Watson, and Holmes' relationship with Watson, which led to the changes witnessed in the later Canon Holmes.

Prior to *The Final Problem* Holmes had had to compete for Watson's attentions. We cannot doubt that this led to incredible insecurities on Holmes' behalf. After Holmes' return, Watson was his (and his alone) and so Holmes was able to establish himself in a secure and committed relationship. It was this commitment which allowed for Holmes' mellowing. The whole of Holmes' evolution can be seen as by-product of his relationship with Watson, and it is here, in his teasing comment to Miss Smith, that this becomes the most apparent.

"Some secretive lover, beyond all doubt. But there are curious and suggestive details about the case, Watson."

With Miss Smith's leaving, Holmes remarks that her follower is likely an admirer, and it is interesting here to note that Holmes has essentially deduced Miss Smith's bearded man as a stalker. We suggest here that Holmes knew only too well what it meant to stalk an object of affection, for Holmes spent several long years silently and stealthily observing Watson. One wonders if Holmes ever went so far as to assume a disguise and follow Watson. We suspect so, and it is entirely likely that it was his past experience which first caused Holmes to dismiss the danger faced by Miss Smith.

Holmes does, however, see some interest in the case, and this leads Watson to question whether Holmes will go down to Farnham. Holmes' answer, here, is quite remarkable.

"You will go down?"

"No, my dear fellow, you will go down."

While Holmes has, on occasion, entrusted Watson to handle Holmes' affairs, this is perhaps the largest indication of trust found in Canon. Holmes not only entrusts Watson to go down to Farnham, but to come back and report his observations. In essence, Watson will be acting in Holmes' stead. Holmes would not have done this if he did not trust Watson implicitly. Perhaps in part due to their changed relationship, Holmes has come to place a good deal of faith in Watson's abilities.

Sadly for Watson, Holmes is not at all impressed with Watson's eventual report. Watson tells us:

Mr. Sherlock Holmes listened with attention to the long report which I was able to present to him that evening, but it did not elicit that word of curt praise which I had hoped for and should have valued. On the contrary, his austere face was even more severe than usual as he commented upon the things that I had done and the things that I had not.

It is quite evident here that, despite Watson's growing confidence, and his security in his relationship with Holmes, Watson still desires Holmes' approval. Holmes then goes on to tell Watson exactly what he has done wrong, and, whereas Watson of old would not have defended himself, this Watson does, responding:

"What should I have done?" I cried, with some heat.

Watson may wish Holmes' approval, but he does not depend on it. It is clear, too, that Watson is quite confident with his position in Holmes' life, for he is not afraid to stand up for himself. One can easily imagine, then, that their fights were quite passionate. One can easily imagine, too, that this passion could be found in other aspects of their relationship as well. What is perhaps more interesting, however, is the shift in Holmes' manner. Clearly Holmes realizes that he has done Watson an injustice, and so he attempts to set things right by dismissing Watson's failure as inconsequential:

"Well, well, my dear sir, don't look so depressed. We can do little more until next Saturday, and in the meantime I may make one or two inquiries myself."

Holmes does indeed head out to make his own inquiries, and upon his return, Watson tells us:

Holmes's quiet day in the country had a singular termination, for he arrived at Baker Street late in the evening, with a cut lip and a discoloured lump upon his forehead...

This paints quite the lovely picture, for one cannot doubt that it was Watson who tended to Holmes' wounds. Indeed, in doing this, Watson seems quite excited, almost demanding that Holmes fill in the details of how he obtained his injuries.

"You are aware that I have some proficiency in the good old British sport of boxing. Occasionally, it is of service, to-day, for example, I should have come to very ignominious grief without it."

I begged him to tell me what had occurred.

We cannot doubt that Watson took great pride in hearing of Holmes' physical escapades. Holmes' prowess as a boxer likely delighted (and undoubtedly aroused) Watson.

In the end, Holmes fares no better than Watson, and it is interesting to note that Holmes is not above sharing this. Indeed, he tells Watson:

"So ended my country trip, and it must be confessed that, however enjoyable, my day on the Surrey border has not been much more profitable than your own."

Clearly this is an attempt to make further amends for Holmes' earlier dismissal of Watson's investigation skills.

All is not lost, however, for the following Saturday Holmes and Watson both make their way to Farnham. They have received a letter from Miss Smith stating that she has resigned her post and would be leaving her employer's household on that day. Holmes and Watson intend to see her off in order to ensure that her mysterious bicycling stalker does not make an appearance. Upon their arrival, Watson tells us:

A rainy night had been followed by a glorious morning, and the heath-covered countryside, with the glowing clumps of flowering gorse, seemed all the more beautiful to eyes which were weary of the duns and drabs and slate grays of London. Holmes and I walked along the broad, sandy road inhaling the fresh morning air and rejoicing in the music of the birds and the fresh breath of the spring.

The above statement is quite amusing, for we must question if indeed this is a case. From Watson's narrative, we would assume Holmes and Watson are off on a romantic holiday. A woman's life hangs in the balance, and yet they take the time to stroll leisurely through the countryside, inhaling the fresh spring air and listening to the birds sing. Is this truly the same Holmes who so single-mindedly focuses all of his attention on his case du jour? Clearly not, and it is quite apparent here that Holmes' senses have been rendered insensible. This is, of course, quite understandable, for love will do such things to a man.

Their leisurely stroll is interrupted, however, Holmes spotting Miss Smith's trap as it barrels down the road, driver-less. Holmes immediately springs into action. Here Watson tells us:

From the instant that we passed the rise, we could no longer see the vehicle, but we hastened onward at such a pace that my sedentary life began to tell upon me, and I was compelled to fall behind.

It is quite clear here that Watson has let himself get out of shape. This is quite interesting, for it calls to mind a similar scene in *A Scandal in Bohemia*. Recall that Holmes, upon seeing Watson for the first time since his marriage, remarked:

"Wedlock suits you," he remarked. "I think, Watson, that you have put on seven and a half pounds since I saw you."

Clearly, Watson, like most men, falls into a sedentary life when married. As we

know Watson to be living in Baker Street, we must therefore assume that Watson's shared life with Holmes is the equivalent of a marriage.

Watson does manage to catch up, and he and Holmes are able to stop the charging horse and climb into the cart. They immediately turn the vehicle around and head off in search of Miss Violet Smith. They soon hear her screams (though not before stumbling across her bearded stalker, who turns out to be none other than her ex-employer, Mr. Carruthers) and discover that she has been forced to wed Mr. Carruthers brutish friend, Mr. Woodley.

Holmes is able to rescue Miss Smith, and prove that her marriage has no legal standing, thereby saving the day for all involved (save, of course, the criminals). As the case draws to a close, Holmes remarks:

"I have been very obtuse, Watson," said he. "When in your report you said that you had seen the cyclist as you thought arrange his necktie in the shrubbery, that alone should have told me all."

Curious, is it not, that Holmes should once again feel it necessary to apologize for criticizing Watson's early investigation. Holmes goes so far as to shoulder the blame, and one wonders if this was Holmes way of reassuring Watson of his faith and trust.

The above statement is also quite interesting given the context of the story. Mr. Carruthers has just admitted to being in love with Miss Violet Smith, stating:

"Even if she couldn't love me, it was a great deal to me just to see her dainty form about the house, and to hear the sound of her voice."

Watson calls him selfish, and yet, Holmes' first thought is to admit to being obtuse. One wonders, then, if Holmes was thinking of his relationship with Watson, for it clearly took Holmes some time to deduce Watson's feelings. Indeed, obtuse is the exact word one would use to describe Holmes' earlier romantic fumbling.

Black Peter

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of Black Peter* in July of 1895. Watson tells us that the story took place in the first week of July, 1895, corresponding with Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in March of 1904.

Synopsis:

Inspector Stanley Hopkins seeks Holmes' aid in finding the man responsible for the murder of Peter Carey. Carey, known to many as Black Peter (due to his dark temper) was found dead inside a small cabin in his yard, a harpoon driven clean through his torso. Although Scotland Yard has in its possession an eyewitness, a tobacco pouch with the initials P.C. on the side, and a notebook containing the initials J.H.N., they are unable to put a case together. Holmes, having determined that the murderer must be a man of incredible strength (given that the harpoon passed through the dead man and embedded itself into the wall behind him) sets out on his own investigation, leaving Scotland Yard to focus their attentions on the wrong man. The final solution brings with it a tale of deceit and scandal, both tied directly to several missing securities.

The Subtext:

I have never known my friend to be in better form, both mental and physical, than in the year '95.

So begins *The Adventure of Black Peter*, and here we cannot help but comment on Watson's opening comment. Indeed, it is quite easy to imagine that Watson knew full well what form, both mental and physical, Holmes was in. It is easy to imagine, too, that Holmes must have been quite content with life. The hiatus over, Holmes was home, and had, within arm's reach, everything he could possibly want (i.e. Watson). This, combined with the physical and mental benefits of a regular sex life, must have seen Holmes in top form. Sex aside, we cannot doubt that Holmes' happiness here was in some way tied to the happy existence he had forged with Watson.

During the first week of July my friend had been absent so often and so long from our lodgings that I knew he had something on hand.

Still in the process of setting the mood for the case, Watson is particular to note that

Holmes has begun working on this case alone. This is interesting, for we later learn that Holmes has been spending his days in harpoon practice at the local butcher's shop. One wonders, then, why it was that Holmes chose to hide this from Watson. Clearly Watson knows Holmes well enough to know that Holmes is engaged on a case (and it is quite interesting that Watson chooses not to press Holmes for information, instead waiting for Holmes to come around to the topic in his own time) and so there should be no reason for Holmes to keep Watson in the dark. In order to answer this question, we must first recall Holmes' past behaviour.

In the beginning stages of their acquaintanceship, Holmes often kept his researches to himself. As their relationship progressed, however, Holmes began to include Watson in his researches with increasing frequency. Throughout Watson's marriage, Holmes sought out Watson constantly in hopes that a case might lure his interest. We see now, however, that Holmes has no need to impress Watson, or even to attract Watson with the prospect of a case. Holmes is free to engage in his own researches, without fear of losing Watson's interest or attention. Holmes' absence here, then, can be seen as Holmes' growing comfort in his relationship with Watson. Truly they have become an old married couple.

Holmes does, of course, upon successful completion of his experiment, fill Watson in on the details. He is unable to get to the purpose behind his absences, however, before they are interrupted by the arrival of Inspector Hopkins. Hopkins finishes what Holmes started, filling in the details regarding the curious death of Peter Carey before once again asking for Holmes' aid. Holmes agrees, but he is unwilling to pursue the matter any further without his Watson.

"Watson, if you can spare the time I should be very glad of your company."

Naturally, Watson agrees, and they are soon off for Forest Row and the home of Black Peter. Holmes' investigation does not last long, however, and, having examined the scene of the crime thoroughly only to find nothing of use, Holmes proposes that they pause in their investigation until evening. Holmes' comment here, one will agree, is quite remarkable:

"Let us walk in these beautiful woods, Watson, and give a few hours to the birds and the flowers."

The above statement is so unlike Holmes of old (a man who cared not for nature) that we can only sit back and stare with wonder. Clearly this is Watson's influence, for it would appear as though Watson's romantic tendencies have rubbed off on the Great

Detective.

Sadly, their romantic meander through the woods comes to an end, Holmes and Watson forced to return to the scene of the crime, so that they might set an ambush for whoever tried to break into the cabin the night before. They are in luck, and someone does return; a Mr. John Hopley Neligan, who is searching for several of his father's lost securities, which he believes to be in the hands of Peter Carey. Neligan tells his story and is then arrested by Inspector Hopkins on the charge of murder, effectively bringing the case to a close.

The next morning, as Holmes and Watson make their way back to Baker Street, Holmes questions Watson as to his thoughts on the matter. The conversation which follows, I am sure you will agree, is quite suggestive.

"I can see that you are not satisfied."

"Oh, yes, my dear Watson, I am perfectly satisfied."

We later learn that Holmes is not, in fact, satisfied with Hopkins' solution (or the arrest of Mr. Neligan). We must then question what it was that Holmes was referring to when he stated his satisfaction. As Holmes and Watson have just left their hotel room, where they passed a long night together, we can only speculate that Holmes' satisfaction had very little to do with the case.

Holmes and Watson soon arrive at Baker Street, and it is there that Holmes turns his attention back to the case. He arranges for Inspector Hopkins' presence, along with several men that Holmes considers prime suspects. Within seconds of their arrival, Holmes is able to deduce which of the three men is responsible for Black Peter's death. Getting this man in cuffs, however, is not as easy as Holmes planned. Indeed, Watson tells us:

The next instant Holmes and the seaman were rolling on the ground together.

Here we must only hope that Watson forgave Holmes for this transgression.

The story soon draws to a close, and we learn that Watson did indeed forgive Holmes, for Holmes, in his closing remark, states:

"If you want me for the trial, my address and that of Watson will be somewhere in Norway -- I'll send particulars later."

As Holmes is unable to send particulars, we must assume this trip is a spontaneous one. As we know Holmes is not working on a case, we must also assume this trip is a personal one. As Holmes makes particular reference to Watson accompanying him, we must conclude that this trip is their long awaited honeymoon.

The Norwood Builder

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Norwood Builder* in August of 1895. Watson does not mention a year, but refers to Holmes having been back some months, implying that the case took place in 1894. Additional evidence for 1894 occurs with Watson's announcement that he has only recently sold his practice. The story was first published in November of 1903.

Synopsis:

In answer to Holmes' statement that London has become a singularly uninteresting city, Holmes and Watson are visited by the unhappy John Hector McFarlane, a young lawyer wanted by the police on a charge of murder. McFarlane begs Sherlock Holmes to clear his name, but the case against him is far darker than his professed innocence would suggest. To begin with, the murdered man, Oldacre, had recently left his entire property to McFarlane in a will. Then, of course, there is McFarlane's family's history with Oldacre, which would again provide a strong motive. Just as Holmes begins to despair that Scotland Yard will hang their man, he is called back to the scene of the crime in order to examine fresh evidence. This evidence, however, proves to be far more useful to Holmes' cause than he would have expected, and from there all that is need is a chorus of "fire" to put the matter to rest.

The Subtext:

At the time of which I speak Holmes had been back for some months, and I, at his request, had sold my practice and returned to share the old quarters in Baker Street.

We have chosen to set *The Norwood Builder* in August of 1894, and using this date Holmes has been back in London some four or five months. In this time, Watson has sold his practice and returned to his rightful place in Baker Street. Interesting, is it not, that it takes Holmes' mere request for Watson to abandon a practice he has practically built from the ground up. Clearly, Watson has his priorities, and clearly these priorities do not lie in the field of his chosen profession.

A young doctor, named Verner, had purchased my small Kensington practice, and given with astonishingly little demur the highest price that I ventured to ask -- an incident which

only explained itself some years later when I found that Verner was a distant relation of Holmes's, and that it was my friend who had really found the money.

While Watson selling his practice is quite remarkable, Holmes arranging to purchase Watson's practice (without Watson's knowledge) is absolutely incredible. Clearly Holmes wanted his Watson by his side, and clearly Holmes was willing to go to any length to achieve this result. In fact, the above statement is so staggering in its implications that it leaves the realm of subtext and enters the realm of text.

The above passages occur while Holmes and Watson are enjoying a comfortable morning in Baker Street. This scene of domesticity is soon interrupted by the arrival of John McFarlane --the unhappiest man in London. Mr. McFarlane is unable to state his case, however, before the arrival of Inspector Lestrade, who is bent on arresting McFarlane for the murder of Jonas Oldacre. Holmes convinces Lestrade to allow McFarlane to tell his tale, a request that Lestrade grudgingly grants.

"The case has certainly some points of interest," said he, in his languid fashion.

Holmes is, naturally, quite interested in the case, and yet we call to mind this statement for it is quite suggestive in its own right. The reader will undoubtedly recall that this is not the first time Watson has referred to Holmes as languid. It is fascinating to note, then, that according to Graham Robb, author of *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century*, languid was a term often employed by Victorian era authors to distinguish characters that would have been commonly referred to as invert (homosexuals). This code word was intended to identify an invert to other inverts, and yet appear harmless to those unable to decipher the code. While we do not suggest that Doyle intended Holmes to be homosexual, it is quite remarkable that Watson should so frequently employ this veiled language.

Having listened to McFarlane's story, Holmes allows Lestrade to escort the man to Scotland Yard. Almost immediately upon his leaving, Holmes announces his intentions to seek out McFarlane's family in Blackheath. It is quite obvious that Watson offers to accompany him, for Holmes replies:

"No, my dear fellow, I don't think you can help me. There is no prospect of danger, or I should not dream of stirring out without you."

Holmes knows this will likely be a simple exercise in information gathering (i.e. grunt work) and so he does not wish to bore Watson. It is interesting, however, that Holmes still takes the time to acknowledge that, were there any prospect of danger, Holmes would immediately want Watson by his side. This level of trust is still quite

touching, regardless of how many decades it spans.

Holmes heads out on his errand, and returns, sometime later, much depressed. Here, Watson tells us:

It was late when my friend returned, and I could see by a glance at his haggard and anxious face that the high hopes with which he had started had not been fulfilled. For an hour he droned away upon his violin, endeavouring to soothe his own ruffled spirits. At last he flung down the instrument and plunged into a detailed account of his misadventures.

We have mentioned before Holmes tendency to fail when he does not include Watson in his cases. This occurs quite frequently during Holmes' earlier cases and Watson's later absence from Baker Street. It is interesting, then, to note here that, in pursuing the case without Watson, Holmes has met failure.

It is telling, too, that Holmes should eventually plunge into a detailed account of his misadventures. Clearly Holmes still uses Watson for a sounding board, but what is more interesting is that this scene is very reminiscent of a spouse working out the day's problem by talking to their partner.

This implication of marriage is taken a step further when Holmes, having relayed his day, states:

"So, my dear Watson, there's my report of a failure."

This is quickly followed by his statement:

"However, there's no good talking any more about it, Watson."

Clearly this is Holmes' way of suggesting that they retire to bed, so that Watson might distract him from the frustrations of the day. Indeed, when next the story picks up, it is morning, and Watson tells us:

I do not know how far Sherlock Holmes took any sleep that night, but when I came down to breakfast I found him pale and harassed, his bright eyes the brighter for the dark shadows round them.

This is quite the interesting statement, for it implies that Watson usually does know Holmes' sleeping patterns. It implies, too, that all likelihood Holmes was still lying beside him when Watson drifted off, and that Watson woke to an empty bed.

Morning brings an apparent break in the case, and Holmes, still quite discontented, does not allow his black mood to reflect on Watson. Indeed, Holmes practically orders Watson to enjoy his breakfast, stating that the case can wait until after Watson has been fed.

"Take your breakfast, Watson, and we will go out together and see what we can do."

It is interesting, too, that Holmes, perhaps having learned that Watson's presence is necessary for the successful completion of a case, automatically assumes that Watson will accompany him. Indeed, Holmes even goes so far as to state:

"I feel as if I shall need your company and your moral support to-day."

There is such vulnerability in this statement, and Holmes is quite open about sharing it. That Holmes should admit such a thing, and should look to Watson for moral support, is quite remarkable; a clear indication of the intimate bond between them.

We deviate now from the story to point out a very interesting shift in Watson's language. Very often, prior to Holmes' death in *The Final Problem*, Watson, when referring to Holmes would use the appellation *acquaintance*, or *companion*. Here, we see that Watson uses, almost exclusively, the term *friend*. Indeed, this change seems to have taken place almost immediately after Holmes' return in *The Empty House*, implying that Holmes' return signified a shift in their intimacy.

As soon as Watson has finished his breakfast, he and Holmes head out to the Norwood to view Lestrade's fresh evidence. Upon seeing that Lestrade has discovered a bloody thumbprint which corresponds exactly with McFarlane's thumb, Holmes becomes quite excited. Here, Watson tells us:

Something in his tone caught my ear, and I turned to look at him. An extraordinary change had come over his face. It was writhing with inward merriment. His two eyes were shining like stars.

While it is still quite touching to know that Watson is capable of reading Holmes' moods solely by a shift in his tone, we are interested here in Watson's description. We have mentioned before Watson's obsession with Holmes' eyes, and yet here Watson is, thirteen years after their first meeting, currently sharing Holmes' bed, and he still finds himself drawn to Holmes' eyes. Clearly we must conclude that Watson is a man very much in love.

Holmes was outwardly calm, but his whole body gave a wriggle of suppressed excitement as he spoke.

We include the above passage, not because it presents any elements of subtextual interest, but because the image of Holmes wriggling with excitement is entirely too amusing to exclude. One wonders if Watson was intimately familiar with this so called wriggling.

This excitement soon shifts as Holmes begins anew with his investigation. Despite this, and Holmes usual single-mindedness, Holmes still expresses an interest in enjoy-

ing the day with his Watson.

“And now, Watson, let us have a little stroll round in the sunshine.”

Perhaps even more remarkable is Watson’s statement that:

With a confused brain, but with a heart into which some warmth of hope was returning, I accompanied my friend in a walk round the garden.

Here Watson speaks of the warmth of hope surging in his heart, and it is quite touching to note that this surge of emotion exists for Holmes. Watson knows that solving the case will bring Holmes happiness, and it is Holmes’ happiness that Watson treasures above everything else.

Their walk complete, Holmes is quickly able to deduce what has been nagging at him all along. With the help of several constables, and a small bit of straw, Holmes is able to smoke out the true criminal; one Jonas Oldacre, who has staged his own death in an effort to frame John McFarlane. As the case comes to a close, we are left with a single curious question. Holmes tells Lestrade that he does not wish his name to appear in the matter, and then states:

“Not at all. The work is its own reward. Perhaps I shall get the credit also at some distant day when I permit my zealous historian to lay out his foolscap once more -- eh, Watson?”

Later, Holmes goes on to remark:

“If ever you write an account, Watson, you can make rabbits serve your turn.”

Watson has told us that Holmes had forbidden him from publishing Holmes’ cases, and we see here that Holmes considers this to be temporary. Watson does not, however, mention Holmes’ motives, and so we find ourselves quite curious as to Holmes’ motivation.

It is your author’s opinion that Holmes’ request stemmed from the shift in Holmes and Watson’s relationship. Holmes knew that Watson would be tempted to embellish the stories with romanticisms, and so it is entirely likely that Holmes worried that Watson might write something which would draw attention to the exact nature of their relationship. By forbidding Watson from writing until after he had retired, Holmes prevented his career from being touched by scandal. While this may seem quite selfish, we must also suggest that Holmes’ request was for Watson’s benefit as well. As Watson had sold his practice, and was not writing, one must assume that Holmes’ practice had become Watson’s as well (for Watson is clearly not in want of money throughout these later cases).

Holmes’ intention, then, was entirely honourable, for he wished to save both his and

Watson's reputation until a time when it would no longer matter.

The Bruce Partington Plans

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans* in November of 1895. As Watson agrees with this date, there is no reason to question the story's place in Baring-Gould's chronology. *The Bruce Partington Plans* was first published in December of 1908.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes is beginning to suspect that the London criminal is no longer an enterprising fellow, as crime of late has been petty at best. No sooner, however, does Holmes complain of the lack of crime than he receives word that Jupiter, in the form of his brother, Mycroft, is descending. Mycroft brings with him a dire case which threatens the very security of England. He all but begs Holmes to look into the curious death of Cadogan West, whose body was found on the Underground line near Aldgate with seven of the ten missing pages of a top secret government project in his pocket. It is believed that Cadogan West stole the Bruce Partington plans, and that the three most valuable pages are now in the hands of an enemy agent. Despite the bleakness of the case, all is not lost, for Holmes is able to construct a case simply upon noting that the body was found next to a series of points. An illegal break in, an interrogation, and a bit of impersonation are all that are needed to bring the case to a close and to safely retrieve the missing plans for the Bruce-Partington submarine.

The Subtext:

In the third week of November, in the year 1895, a dense yellow fog settled down upon London. From the Monday to the Thursday I doubt whether it was ever possible from our windows in Baker Street to see the loom of the opposite houses.

So begins *The Adventure of the Bruce Partington Plans*, and it is interesting to note that Watson goes on to tell us that he and Holmes spent those four days locked inside of Baker Street, with only each other for company.

But when, for the fourth time, after pushing back our chairs from breakfast we saw the greasy, heavy brown swirl still drifting past us and condensing in oily drops upon the window-panes, my comrade's impatient and active nature could endure this drab existence no

longer.

It is interesting, too, to note that Watson was able to distract Holmes from his inaction for three full days. While we are disappointed that he could not manage a fourth, we really must applaud him; both for his perseverance, and his stamina.

Fortunately for Holmes (and, indeed, Watson), the monotony of their fourth day is soon interrupted by a telegram from Mycroft. This raises Holmes' spirits considerably, and he asks:

"By the way, do you know what Mycroft is?"

Recall that Watson first met Mycroft in *The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter*, a case which Baring-Gould set in 1888. We have speculated that Holmes and Watson, during this time, had only just begun to experiment with redefining their relationship. This was obviously quite tentative, for Watson, at the first sign of trouble, abandoned Holmes for a wife. We can safely assume, then, that Holmes, while quite taken with Watson, did not fully trust Watson when he first introduced Watson to Mycroft. It is interesting, then, to note that this has changed.

"I did not know you quite so well in those days. One has to be discreet when one talks of high matters of state. You are right in thinking that he under the British government. You would also be right in a sense if you said that occasionally he is the British government."

This gives us what is perhaps the strongest evidence to suggest that Holmes and Watson's relationship has become quite serious. It is also quite apparent that both Holmes and Watson are quite aware of this shift. We have not, however, seen any evidence to suggest that either of them have voiced their feelings on the subject, and yet, the above example of trust is a clear indication that they are well on their way.

Holmes continues his detailed description of exactly what Mycroft's job entails, Watson listening with attention until Holmes mentions Cadogan West. It is then that Watson recalls having heard the name before, and he is soon able to produce the newspaper clipping describing Cadogan West's death. The news peaks Holmes' interest and he asks Watson to relay the facts, as they are set out in the article.

He snuggled down in his armchair. "Now, Watson, let us have the facts."

Curious, is it not, that Watson should describe Holmes as snuggling down into his armchair. Curious, too, that Holmes should feel compelled to snuggle down into his armchair before listening to the sound of Watson's voice.

Watson's recital of the publicly known facts soon gives way to Mycroft's arrival. Mycroft is able to fill in the lesser known facts, and, upon hearing the whole of the case,

Holmes does as his brother suggests and springs into action.

"Well, well!" said Holmes, shrugging his shoulders. "Come, Watson!"

Not, of course, without his Watson.

Their first stop is the line of the London Underground near Aldgate station. There, Holmes is struck by the proximity of the body to a set of points. Indeed, he becomes quite excited, and Watson tells us:

On these his eager, questioning eyes were fixed, and I saw on his keen, alert face that tightening of the lips, that quiver of the nostrils, and concentration of the heavy, tufted brows which I knew so well.

While we are not in the least surprised by Watson's observation of Holmes, nor are we surprised by the attention to detail Watson gives in describing Holmes, the above statement is quite remarkable in its eroticism. Not that Watson speaks of the tightening of Holmes' lips, and the quivering of his nostrils. He then goes on to mention the concentration in his brows, telling us that he knew it so well. While we cannot doubt that this is the expression Holmes' donned when investigating a case, we must also note that tightening lips, quivering nostrils, and concentrative brows are quite common in more intimate settings. One wonders, then, if Watson was describing Holmes on the case, or Holmes the prior evening, before Mycroft came to distract Holmes from Watson's attentions.

We must, however, turn for a moment from the case and examine a very curious statement. As their investigation continues, Watson has reason to tell us:

It was one of my friend's most obvious weaknesses that he was impatient with less alert intelligences than his own.

While the above is not subtextual in nature, it is interesting to point out, for it suggests that Watson truly did underestimate his abilities. If Watson lacked in intelligent and was incapable of stimulating Holmes, one cannot doubt that Holmes would have long grown frustrated by Watson's presence. As this has not occurred, and, indeed, it would appear as though Holmes has allowed Watson access beyond that of any other person, we must conclude that Watson was far more intelligent than Watson's writing would have us believe. Truly, then, their relationship was one of equals.

Returning to the case at hand, having now discovered the unusual coincidence of a set of points and curve existing where the body was found, Holmes and Watson are free to continue on with their investigation. They engage in a series of interviews before finally examining the building in which the submarine plans were usually kept. There,

Watson tells us:

It was only when we were on the lawn outside that his interest was strongly excited.

And we must conclude that Holmes was quite the exhibitionist. One can easily imagine, then, that it was Watson who kept him in line and prevented any hint of scandal.

Things grow darker for Cadogan West as their investigation continues, and Holmes begins to despair ever retrieving the missing documents. Distressed, and without a real lead, Holmes and Watson head back to Baker Street. It is there that they receive a wire from Mycroft listing known foreign agents believed to be in London during the time of the theft. One address sparks hope, and Holmes, turning to Watson, states:

“Why, Watson, I do honestly believe that we are going to pull it off, after all.” He slapped me on the shoulder with a sudden burst of hilarity.

We see here another element of their relationship. Above, we suggested that Holmes appreciated and enjoyed Watson’s intelligence, and here we suggest that Holmes was also quite grateful to have someone with whom he could celebrate his successes. We have no doubt that Holmes would be quite bored, and, indeed, quite lonely, without his Watson.

Holmes then announces his intention to head out. He is careful, however, to state:

“It is only a reconnaissance. I will do nothing serious without my trusted comrade and biographer at my elbow.”

Clearly Holmes has come to value Watson beyond that of a mere helpmate. That he should think to reassure Watson is quite indicative of the feelings Holmes has developed for Watson. Holmes values Watson’s time and contribution to his cases, but more so, Holmes values Watson’s feelings, and is quite careful to ensure Watson does not feel taken for granted.

Holmes continues, telling Watson:

“Do you stay here, and the odds are that you will see me again in an hour or two. If time hangs heavy get foolscap and a pen, and begin your narrative of how we saved the State.”

Holmes begins by giving an estimate of how long he shall be away, an act which is far more suggestive of a husband speaking to his wife than of a friend speaking to a friend. Then, of course, there is Holmes’ suggestion that Watson begin his narrative, Holmes attempting to validate Watson’s position by encouraging Watson’s writing (something which Holmes has so often criticized in the past).

Indeed, that Watson’s response should be to wait patiently for Holmes’ return is also

quite telling.

All the long November evening I waited, filled with impatience for his return.

One can easily picture Watson waiting, and longing, for Holmes' return. Clearly, at this point in their relationship, the two are quite inseparable.

Watson does not have to wait long, for he soon receives word from Holmes, instructing him to meet Holmes at Goldini's Restaurant. Watson does not, of course, hesitate in heading out.

Upon Watson's arrival, Holmes begins to relay the chain of events he has been able to forge. Watson listens with interest, but upon hearing that Holmes means to illegally enter the home of a known foreign agent, Watson expresses some reservation. Their conversation, one must agree, is quite telling.

"I don't like it, Holmes."

"My dear fellow, you shall keep watch in the street. I'll do the criminal part. It's not a time to stick at trifles. Think of Mycroft's note, of the Admiralty, the Cabinet, the exalted person who waits for news. We are bound to go."

My answer was to rise from the table.

"You are right, Holmes. We are bound to go."

He sprang up and shook me by the hand.

"I knew you would not shrink at the last," said he, and for a moment I saw something in his eyes which was nearer to tenderness than I had ever seen. The next instant he was his masterful, practical self once more.

Note first that Holmes did not in truth doubt his Watson. He knows Watson well, and while he may have anticipated Watson's initial objection, Holmes was certain Watson would join him. This speaks to their long association and intimacy, and, indeed, their intimacy.

It is not, however, this familiarity which makes the above exchange so extraordinary. I refer here, of course, to the look of tenderness which appears in Holmes' eyes. In order to fully absorb the meaning behind this, we must once again turn to chronology.

Recall that Holmes and Watson have been living together, on and off, for some fifteen years. In that time they have gone from acquaintances to roommates, to reserved friends, to close friends, to lovers, to estranged lovers, to intimate friends again, and then, upon Holmes' return, they have once again fallen into the role of lovers. There is, however, a significant shift, for prior to Watson's marriage their relationship was fumbling, built more on lust than love. Now, however, they have come to love one

another, completely and utterly, without condition, and while they have yet to vocalize this love, we see here that they draw ever nearer to doing so.

That Holmes should allow, even if only briefly, his affection for Watson to show upon his features is quite telling. It speaks of trust, and it speaks of Holmes' growing comfort, for although he is still uncertain how best to express the depths of his emotions, he is beginning to see that doing so is not such a difficult thing, after all.

Watson having agreed to aid Holmes in his quest, they soon head out for the home of Oberstein, where Holmes soon realizes that they will need to scale a small wall. Here we are privy to the obvious sense of professional partnership which existed throughout their personal relationship. It is quite remarkable that they were able to blend the two together so seamlessly.

"Give me a hand, Watson, and I'll do the same for you."

Then again, it is entirely possible that Holmes merely wanted an excuse to hold Watson's hand in public.

We must deviate from the story itself now to touch on an interesting parallel. The later half of *The Bruce Partington Plans* sees Holmes and Watson engaging in criminal activity. Their intent is to break into a private residence and gather evidence. It is, however, quite interesting to note that this expedition occurs simultaneously with the distinct shift in their relationship that we have mentioned above. As Holmes and Watson grow closer, Watson's literary accounts of their relationship becoming increasingly obvious. We begin to see, then, the obvious innuendo hidden in many of Watson's references to the case.

For example, on their journey to Oberstein's residence, Holmes states:

"Don't drop the instruments, I beg. Your arrest as a suspicious character would be a most unfortunate complication."

Here Holmes suggests that Watson's arrest would complicate their investigation. While carrying housebreaking tools was illegal in London after dark, we cannot help but wonder if this was the only law Holmes was referring to. Indeed, this theme continues:

"There is an excellent archway down yonder in case a too zealous policeman should intrude."

We see again Holmes referring to the law, and the illegality of what they are about to do. We must also note that Holmes suggests that they hide out of sight, so as to avoid the eyes of the law.

Hardly had we reached the dark shadows before the step of the policeman was heard in the fog above.

Finally, we are treated to Holmes and Watson hiding in the dark shadows in order to avoid the police. In order to analyze this from the point of view of the student of subtext, we must first recall that homosexuality, during this time period, was quite illegal. By noting this, we begin to see the insinuation in Watson's narrative. Holmes and Watson's burgling, then, becomes an allusion for Holmes and Watson's sexual relationship. Both are illegal in the eyes of the law, but right in the eyes of justice.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of Sherlock Holmes was his power of throwing his brain out of action and switching all his thoughts on to lighter things whenever he had convinced himself that he could no longer work to advantage.

Their investigation goes well, and upon returning to Baker Street, Holmes soon puts the case aside in favour of recreational activities. One can easily imagine that Holmes was just as struck by the innuendo of their earlier activities.

His libido satisfied, Holmes is able to once again focus on the case, and he and Watson soon find themselves back at Oberstein's home, this time waiting in ambush for the man responsible for stealing the submarine plans.

With the shock, his broad-brimmed hat flew from his head, his cravat slipped sown from his lips, and there were the long light beard and the soft, handsome delicate features of Colonel Valentine Walter.

The above passage occurs moments after their trap has been sprung, and it is interesting to note Watson's description of Colonel Walter. Clearly, Watson is still able to admire and appreciate an attractive man. One wonders if Holmes shared his opinion, or if, upon later reading Watson's account, Holmes scolded Watson for allowing his eye to wander.

It would appear, however, as though it was Watson who was prone to jealousy, for later, the case successfully concluded, Holmes returns to Baker Street after a solitary outing wearing a remarkable emerald tie-pin. It is quite amusing to note that Watson is unable to prevent himself from asking after it.

When I asked him if he had bought it, he answered that it was a present from a certain gracious lady in whose interests he had once been fortunate enough to carry out a small commission. He said no more; but I fancy that I could guess at that lady's august name, and I have little doubt that the emerald pin will forever recall to my friend's memory the adventure of the Bruce- Partington plans.

While Watson does make this appear a casual affair, we cannot doubt that his first worry was that Holmes had received the tie-pin from another suitor. Watson's relief, then, upon learning that Holmes had received it at Windsor, is quite evident. Even then, it is entirely possible that Watson, in the following month, purchased an equally lavish gift, which he then gave to Holmes as a Christmas present.

The Veiled Lodger

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger* in October of 1896. Watson tells us that the case took place in late 1896, and yet it is curious to note that Baring-Gould does not date any cases between November of 1895 and October of 1896. While we do not doubt Watson's date, we must question this period of inactivity, especially as Watson has previously made reference (SOLI) to Holmes being an exceedingly busy man between the years 1894 to 1901. The story was first published in January of 1927.

Synopsis:

In one of Watson's more unusual narratives, *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger* is not an adventure at all. In fact, the only mystery that exists is that of a decades-old unsolved case. Still, it is a curious story, tragic and not without its merits. In *The Veiled Lodger*, Holmes finds himself agreeing to meet with Mrs. Ronder, a woman Holmes recalls from an earlier investigation involving the death of a man and the mutilation of a woman at the hands of a circus lion. At the time, Holmes felt certain that there was more to the case than a mere mishap, and so he is quite eager to hear, first hand, Mrs. Ronder's account of the event which left her husband dead and her face disfigured.

The Subtext:

When one considers that Mr. Sherlock Holmes was in active practice for twenty-three years, and that during seventeen of these I was allowed to cooperate with him and to keep notes of his doings...

So begins *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger*, and here we pause to examine Watson's statement in terms of chronology. Holmes' first case (ignoring *The Gloria Scott*, as Holmes was not yet in practice at this time) was documented by Watson in a publication entitled *The Musgrave Ritual*. According to Baring-Gould, this case occurred in October of 1879. We must also note that Holmes refers to this as his third case, and yet he clearly tells us that it was this case which set him forward into public practice.

Holmes' last official case, prior to his retirement, took place in September of 1903. We can therefore suggest that Holmes was in active practice from 1879 to 1903. This

marks the passage of twenty-four years. But, of course, Holmes was not in active practice during the hiatus (1891-1894), and so, therefore, we must deduct these three years. By our calculations, then, Holmes has been in active practice for some twenty-one years. We will assume Watson's calculation, then, stemmed from 1877, the year in which Holmes took rooms in Montague Street (according to most scholars) and began establishing his practice (even if the first few months resulted in stagnation).

Watson then tells us that he was involved in Holmes' cases for seventeen of these years. Watson's first case, we know, was documented in *A Study in Scarlet* and took place shortly after their meeting in the spring of 1881. Seventeen years brings us to 1898. Adding three years to this to account for the hiatus and we are brought to 1901; two years shy of Holmes' career. Either Watson miscalculated, or there exists a period of two years sometime between *STUD* and Holmes' retirement in which Watson was away from Baker Street. While this is certainly a topic for speculation, we suggest here that Watson was not referring to his role in Holmes' practice, but rather, his role in Holmes' life, and so Watson deducted the two years between 1889 and 1891 from his tally, as during this period of time he was married to Mary Morstan, and hence could not consider himself wholly devoted to Holmes.

One forenoon — it was late in 1896 — I received a hurried note from Holmes asking for my attendance.

Here we are presented with another interesting problem. Prior to this case, and indeed, immediately after it, Watson appears to be living in Baker Street. We know, too, that Watson has sold his practice and now devotes all of his time to Holmes and their growing practice. Why, then, did Holmes have to send for Watson?

While other scholars have suggested that Watson was living away from Baker Street during this case (and, indeed, several have questioned the placement of this story in terms of chronology), it is your author's opinion that Watson was not away from Baker Street at all. In fact, Watson had merely stepped out to run several personal errands, and Holmes, knowing Watson's habits, sent a messenger out to find Watson on the street. In all likelihood Holmes knew exactly where to find Watson; an indication of their growing intimacy and the familiarity resulting from a long-standing relationship.

Holmes does, of course, find Watson, and Watson immediately rushes back to Baker Street, where he finds Holmes interviewing a client. Here, Holmes tells Watson:

"Mrs. Merrilow does not object to tobacco, Watson, if you wish to indulge your filthy

habits.”

We cannot help but find this comment amusing, for it would appear as though their relationship is as strong as ever, Holmes teasing Watson playfully, and in the company of a client, no less.

Holmes and Watson’s banter is pushed aside so that their client can relay her story. She is acting on behalf of her lodger, a woman Holmes has reason to know, and requests that Holmes come in person to hear first hand the tale of this strange, veiled lady. Holmes agrees, and Mrs. Merrilow leaves, upon which Holmes recounts the original case which first introduced him to Mrs. Merrilow’s lodger.

“Have you no recollection of the Abbas Parva tragedy?”

“None, Holmes.”

“And yet you were with me then.”

We can obvious date the original case at an early point in Holmes and Watson’s relationship, and yet here we are more concerned with Holmes’ comment that Watson was *with me then*. It is quite adorable that Holmes should have to search for the details of this case, and yet, he clearly remembers that Watson was, as ever, by his side. Why Watson does not recall the case is a question best left to the ages.

Holmes takes a moment to go over the details of the original case, and upon finishing, he asks after Watson’s thoughts. While Watson’s response is quite fascinating, as it speaks to Watson’s progress, here we wish to examine Holmes’ reaction.

Holmes looked thoughtful and remained in silence for some moments.

“Well, Watson, there is this to be said for your theory...”

One can almost picture Holmes’ amazement; that Watson should suggest a theory which did not at the time occur to Holmes is truly a sign that Watson is fast becoming a reasoner of his own merit. Indeed, one can almost hear the pride in Holmes’ voice; for we know that Watson was unable to make such a suggestion in the first instance of the case. We have mentioned before the growing equality which now exists between them, and here we remark that this equality has largely grown out of their shared relationship. We see Watson becoming increasingly confident in his deductions, and we see Holmes becoming increasingly open with his emotions. Clearly, their relationship has been to the benefit of both men.

Sadly, Watson’s theory proves to be incorrect, as does Holmes’, and as the story winds to a close, we must remark upon the curious nature of the story itself. The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger is not by any normal standards a tale of adventure or

mystery. Nor does it highlight any of Holmes' singular talents. One must question, then, why Watson chose to include such a story.

Remarkably, although *The Veiled Lodger* does not showcase Holmes the brilliant detective, it does showcase Holmes the human being. This is a very rare occurrence in Watson's narratives, for he often depicts Holmes as a machine; a brain without a heart. We see here Holmes with a heart, and we must assume that Watson intentionally chose a story which would highlight Holmes' emotional growth.

And so, if Watson intentionally depicted Holmes the man, then it is entirely reasonable to suggest that he did so in order to demonstrate to the world what it was that he loved best about Holmes. Watson, while infatuated with the detective, loved the man, and it is quite natural that he should wish to share this aspect of Holmes' personality with the world. This is particularly obvious in Holmes' interaction with Mrs. Ronder, for Holmes is quite sympathetic towards the woman (above and beyond anything we have seen from Holmes in the past). Indeed, Watson tells us:

Then Holmes stretched out his long arm and patted her hand with such a show of sympathy as I had seldom known him to exhibit.

"Poor girl!" he said. "Poor girl! The ways of fate are indeed hard to understand. If there is not some compensation hereafter, then the world is a cruel jest."

It becomes quite apparent that Watson has come to fully know the man behind the detective. It becomes apparent, too, that, as Watson's affection and, indeed, love for Holmes grew, so too did his desire to share this aspect of Holmes' personality with the public.

The Sussex Vampire

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire* in November of 1896. Watson does not give us a date, but Holmes has received a note dated the nineteenth of November, confirming Baring-Gould's month. While we cannot be certain of the year, Baring-Gould's calculation (based on dates and weather patterns) is quite convincing. The story was first published in January of 1924.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes, his feet planted firmly upon the ground, can only scoff when he receives word that he has been recommended on a case concerning vampires. Despite Holmes' conviction that no ghosts need apply, he does indeed take up the case, and soon discovers that the mystery transcends a supernatural explanation. A lame dog, a wall of South American curiosities, and a reflection in a window pane are all that Holmes needs to bring the case to a satisfactory, if not desirable, conclusion.

The Subtext:

Holmes had read carefully a note which the last post had brought him. Then, with the dry chuckle which was his nearest approach to a laugh, he tossed it over to me.

Although not directly of interest to the student of subtext, we wish to point out a slight error in Watson's narrative. Watson distinctly tells us that a dry chuckle is Holmes' nearest approach to a laugh, and yet, on numerous other occasions, Watson has written of Holmes laughing out loud. A prime example would be the occurrence in *SIGN*, in which *Sherlock Holmes and I looked blankly at each other and then burst simultaneously into an uncontrollable fit of laughter*. Other incidences can be found in *STUD*, *MISS*, and *REDH* (the latter in which Holmes lets out a roar of laughter), to name a few.

One must question, then, why it is that Watson saw fit to tell us that Holmes was, in essence, incapable of laughter. Could it be that this case succeeded an argument? Perhaps Holmes was in a sour mood, and had been from some time, hence Watson's inability to recall Holmes' laughter. While the pair do not appear to be arguing during this case, it is preposterous to assume that Holmes and Watson's relationship was

without its problems. Holmes and Watson would not be human were they not prone to the occasional spat.

Oddly enough, we begin to see a possible reason for this tiff (and, indeed, we will identify an additional reason in our analyses of *The Missing Three-Quarter*), for Holmes, after Watson has read the note referencing a case involving Matilda Briggs, is very careful to note that:

“Matilda Briggs was not the name of a young woman, Watson,” said Holmes in a reminiscent voice.

Is it unreasonable to suggest, then, that Holmes and Watson were subject to a falling out, and that this falling out centered around a young woman? One can easily imagine a young female client showing interest in Holmes, much to Watson’s dismay. This would naturally lead to a fit of jealousy and possessiveness on Watson’s behalf, which Holmes would undoubtedly dismiss; further angering Watson in the process. While this is mere speculation, what is undoubtedly clear is that, by this point, whatever row occurred between the two men has long since passed, and they are well on their way to making amends.

Holmes’ statement leads him to reminisce over the case which he casually refers to as the Giant Rat of Sumatra, an intriguing introduction to the topic of vampires. Holmes then requests that Watson *make a long arm and see what V has to say*. Watson does so, and then tells us:

Holmes balanced it on his knee, and his eyes moved slowly and lovingly over the record of old cases, mixed with the accumulated information of a lifetime.

Odd, is it not, that Watson should refer to Holmes’ manner as loving. For a man Watson once accused of being a machine, this is a clear indication that Holmes has changed. So, too, we suspect, has Watson’s insight, for it is apparent now that Watson is far more intimately acquainted with Holmes than he once was.

Unsatisfied that the case before him has anything to do with the supernatural, Holmes then turns his attention to the second letter he has received. In it, the author, Robert Ferguson, claims affiliation with Watson. As it turns out, Ferguson and Watson are old Rugby pals, a confirmation which causes Holmes to state:

Holmes looked at me thoughtfully and shook his head.

“I never get your limits, Watson,” said he. “There are unexplored possibilities about you.”

While we cannot agree more (there are, indeed, unexplored possibilities about Wat-

son) it is quite remarkable to hear Holmes confess this. In fact, it is quite easy to imagine that Watson was the one person Holmes was incapable of fully deducing. As such, Watson is constantly able to surprise and amaze Holmes; a trait which Holmes undoubtedly found quite refreshing. We begin to see, then, part of Watson's appeal, for Holmes must have found him an unending source of interest and intrigue.

Having read the second letter, Holmes agrees to take on the case, and so arranges that Ferguson should meet them at Baker Street the next morning. Their interview is short, for Holmes feels he may be of more use at Lamberley than in London. His remark comes as a great relief to Ferguson, who expresses some doubt at Holmes' sincerity. To this, Holmes replies:

"Of course we could come. There is a lull at present. I can give you my undivided energies. Watson, of course, comes with us."

Note that Holmes does not ask if Watson will come with them. Nor does he even consider the possibility that Watson might not come. It is taken for granted that Watson will come, and we cannot help but suspect that this is because Holmes was no longer able (or willing) to work without his Watson.

The pair soon head out to Lamberley, in Sussex, so that Holmes might begin his investigation. There, he is quickly able to put the pieces together and prove that Mr. Ferguson's wife is not, in fact, a vampire. Indeed, it was his eldest son, from a previous marriage, who was responsible for poisoning Mrs. Ferguson's infant, and Mrs. Ferguson was merely attempting to suck the poison out, lest it kill her child.

Mr. Ferguson does not take the news well, and this allows for a very uncharacteristic move on Holmes' behalf.

Holmes put his hand soothingly upon his arm.

We have noted before the subtle change in Holmes which occurred after his return, and we see here that Holmes continues to gain a sense of empathy. He is steadily becoming more human, and we can tie this shift directly to Holmes' relationship with Watson. Truly, Watson has changed Holmes for the better.

Indeed, in addition to this empathy, Holmes has also become increasingly considerate:

"This, I fancy, is the time for our exit, Watson," said Holmes in a whisper.

While Holmes has never been one to linger beyond the conclusion of a case, we cannot help but note that Holmes' desire to leave occurs simultaneously with Mr. and Mrs. Ferguson's reunion. Holmes seems to know exactly when to leave a couple to their

own devices, a telling trait, suggestive of the fact that Holmes is not a stranger to love. As we have seen no other proof to substantiate an outside relationship for Holmes, we must therefore assume that Holmes is involved in an inside relationship. As the only person within his intimate circle is Watson, we can therefore conclude that Holmes and Watson were very much a couple.

The Missing Three-Quarter

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter* in December of 1896. Watson tells us that it is February, some seven to eight years prior to the date of the story's writing. As the story was first published in August of 1904, this would place the case sometime between August 1896 and August 1897. Baring-Gould's date does correspond with this, but if Watson's February is correct, then the case falls in 1897. It should be noted, however, that Baring-Gould's argument for December is due to the story's subject matter: a Rugby game between Cambridge and Oxford, which would have, traditionally, occurred in December.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes is visited by a distraught Civil Overton of Trinity College, in Cambridge. Overton is missing his Three-Quarter, and without Godfrey Staunton Cambridge has no hope of winning against Oxford on the morrow. While Holmes admits that the game of Rugby is outside of his usual area of expertise, he agrees to take on the case, and soon discovers that it is far more complicated than he'd anticipated. In fact, it is not until Holmes sets out on the trail of a Dr. Armstrong that Holmes is able to trace Staunton, though he does not find the man in time to prevent Cambridge's loss.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter is unique in that it is one of the few post-return stories that references Holmes' cocaine addiction. Here, Watson tells us:

Things had indeed been very slow with us, and I had learned to dread such periods of inaction, for I knew by experience that my companion's brain was so abnormally active that it was dangerous to leave it without material upon which to work. For years I had gradually weaned him from that drug mania which had threatened once to check his remarkable career. Now I knew that under ordinary conditions he no longer craved for this artificial stimulus, but I was well aware that the fiend was not dead, but sleeping; and I have known that the sleep was a light one and the waking near when in periods of idleness I have seen the drawn look upon Holmes's ascetic face, and the brooding of his deep-set and inscrutable eyes.

It should be noted that this is the first acknowledgement we have been given that it was Watson who weaned Holmes from his cocaine addiction. This is quite fascinating, for in SIGN, Holmes brushed off Watson's concern, refusing to acknowledge the destructive nature of his pastime.

This leads, of course, to several interesting questions, and their resulting theories. The first such question would be, simply; when did Watson wean Holmes from cocaine?

Watson makes no reference to Holmes' cocaine-use post Holmes' return, and so we must suggest that it was prior to, or during, the hiatus that Watson was able to curb Holmes' habit. Indeed, Nicolas Myer wrote a pastiche which discounted Holmes' account of the hiatus, suggesting instead that Watson used this period of three years to aid Holmes in his recovery from cocaine addiction. While not widely accepted by scholars, it is an interesting suggestion.

Others have suggested, however, that it was Holmes who abandoned his cocaine habit, shortly after his confrontation with Moriarty, and that it was done with Watson's warnings in mind.

Others still have suggested that Watson was able to wean Holmes from his addiction even before Holmes' confrontation with Moriarty.

Regardless of when, it is interesting to note that it was Watson who weaned Holmes from this seeming addiction, and so we must question why it was that Holmes refused to allow Watson's interference in SIGN and yet willingly allowed Watson's aid at a later date.

To the student of subtext, the answer must be obvious. Holmes gave up his cocaine habit at Watson's urging, because Holmes was very much in love with Watson, and willing to do whatever it took to make Watson happy, and to keep Watson in Baker Street.

Having settled the when and the why, we must now turn to examine Watson's statement that *the fiend was not dead, but sleeping*. We see in this statement such worry on Watson's behalf. Recall that Watson was well ahead of his time, for if we accept Baring-Gould's date, then this story took place in 1896, a year when cocaine was still quite legal (indeed, it was 1906 before cocaine was removed as an ingredient from the popular beverage, Coca-Cola). Watson, however, was only too aware of the dark reaction which overcame Holmes when he was using the substance, and so it is easy to imagine that Watson would do everything in his power to prevent Holmes from once

again seeking solace in the drug.

Indeed, it is easy to imagine Watson's hovering during this period of time, for he undoubtedly knew that Holmes' return to cocaine would be detrimental to their relationship. This will become a key point later in the story, but for now we shall turn to Overton's note, and his imminent arrival.

It is not long after Overton's arrival (preceded by a note), and his unusual narrative, that Holmes agrees to take on his case. Together they return to Godfrey Staunton's hotel, where they search his rooms and interview the porter. They manage to discover half of a telegram message on Staunton's blotting paper and Watson, after hearing the message, suggests that they need only look into whom the telegram was sent to in order to move forward in their investigation. Holmes' response, one must agree, is quite amusing.

"Exactly, my dear Watson. Your reflection, though profound, had already crossed my mind."

Interesting, is it not, that Holmes and Watson's thoughts should be so linked. Obviously they are spending a good deal of time in one another's company. Indeed, the sharing of thoughts is a trait often associated with long-married couples.

We must pause momentarily to once again comment on Holmes' use of *my dear*. In most stories, Holmes uses this term of affection once, perhaps as many as three times, but here, in *The Missing Three-Quarters*, we see its use no fewer than seven times. This is quite fascinating, especially if one considers the placement of this story against *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*.

Recall that Baring-Gould dated *The Sussex Vampire* in November of 1896, and that he dates *The Missing Three-Quarter* in December of 1896. Recall, too, our suggestion that SUSS succeeded an argument between Holmes and Watson. If indeed we are correct, and Holmes and Watson had argued shortly before the events in SUSS, then it is quite easy to imagine that, not quite a month later, this incident would still be quite fresh in Holmes' mind. It is quite natural, then, that Holmes would continue to go out of his way to demonstrate his affection, as, while it is quite obvious that they have made amends, Holmes would not likely be quite as confident in their relationship as he once was.

In fact, this ties in nicely to Watson's comment regarding Holmes' cocaine use. One wonders, then, if their argument in SUSS resulted from a slip on Holmes' behalf. It is entirely possible that Holmes once again turned to cocaine, the result of which

would have been for Watson to threaten to leave. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Holmes would have immediately cast aside his syringe in order to ensure that Watson remained in Baker Street.

We do not doubt Watson would leave, either, for it is obvious that he has given up much for Holmes. Indeed, Watson tells us:

It argues the degree in which I had lost touch with my profession that the name of Leslie Armstrong was unknown to me.

That Watson would willingly give up his profession for Holmes is quite touching, and we have no doubt that Watson would have expected Holmes to give up something in return. Relationships are built on compromise, and it is certain that Watson would have known this, for he was the more experienced of the two. That Watson's request would have been for Holmes to give up cocaine is without question, for we know that Watson tolerated Holmes' cocaine use only with strong objection.

At this point, Holmes and Watson have begun their investigation in earnest. They have followed the trail of Staunton's telegram and it has taken them to the home of Dr. Leslie Armstrong. There, Armstrong refuses to help, all but having Holmes and Watson thrown out of his house.

"And now, my poor Watson, here we are, stranded and friendless in this inhospitable town, which we cannot leave without abandoning our case. This little inn just opposite Armstrong's house is singularly adapted to our needs. If you would engage a front room and purchase the necessities for the night, I may have time to make a few inquiries."

The above statement presents several elements of interest to the student of subtext. We note first that Holmes has shifted tactics, and is now referring to Watson as his *poor* Watson, rather than his *dear* Watson. It is interesting to note that this is still quite indicative of Holmes' possessiveness where Watson is concerned.

Holmes then goes on to suggest that they check into a small inn adjacent to Armstrong's home. In particular, Holmes requests that Watson engage a front *room*, suggesting that they will be sharing. While this is not unusual, what is unusual is Watson's slip here; he does not even attempt to hide the fact that he and Holmes are sharing a room, and, most likely, a bed.

Indeed, after they have checked in, Holmes leaves to pursue some leads on his own. Upon his return, Watson tells us:

A cold supper was ready upon the table, and when his needs were satisfied and his pipe alight he was ready to take that half comic and wholly philosophic view which was natural

to him when his affairs were going awry.

That Holmes should pause amidst an investigation so that he might satisfy his needs is quite remarkable. That Watson should share this fact with the public is practically scandalous.

It is only after they have engaged in their post-supper activities, and Holmes has had his post-activities pipe, that they begin to discuss the case. Here Watson is quite useful, asking many of the same questions Holmes would have asked, and offering up several theories which seem to astound Holmes. Indeed, Holmes cannot help but cry out:

"Excellent, Watson! You are scintillating this evening."

It becomes quite apparent, then, that their post-supper activities have served to brighten both of their moods.

Holmes' praise is not, however, limited to their post-coital discussion. Indeed, the next morning Watson offers to follow Dr. Armstrong on the bicycle, hoping to succeed where Holmes' failed. While Holmes does dismiss this idea, he tells Watson:

"No, no, my dear Watson! With all respect for your natural acumen I do not think that you are quite a match for the worthy doctor."

While this may seem less of a compliment and more of an insult, recall that Holmes himself has been bested by Dr. Armstrong. Even without this fact, one sees Holmes' carefully placed praise, for he clearly remarks on Watson's natural insight and sharpness.

Having dismissed Watson's suggestion, Holmes once again heads out on his own to investigate the countryside. Upon his return, he tells Watson:

"Early to bed to-night, Watson, for I foresee that to-morrow may be an eventful day."

One instantly doubts that they could appear more married if they tried. Truly remarkable.

We can now safely return to our above hypothesis, which suggested that Holmes would have known that his continued cocaine use would have inevitably become detrimental to his relationship with Watson. We have suggested that Holmes was well aware of this when he decided, with Watson's aid, to put aside the habit for good. We have also suggested that Holmes cast aside his cocaine in favour of a relationship with Watson. This soon becomes quite clear, for the next morning, Watson tells us:

I was horrified by my first glimpse of Holmes next morning, for he sat by the fire holding his tiny hypodermic syringe. I associated that instrument with the single weakness of his nature, and I feared the worst when I saw it glittering in his hand. He laughed at my

expression of dismay, and laid it upon the table.

"No, no, my dear fellow, there is no cause for alarm. It is not upon this occasion the instrument of evil, but it will rather prove to be the key which will unlock our mystery."

Note first that Watson appears horrified by spotting Holmes with his syringe in hand. This lends weight to the theory that it was Holmes' relapse into cocaine use which led to a spat between Holmes and Watson in *The Sussex Vampire*. We see, too, Watson's dismay, for clearly he has been quite firm on this particular condition. That Holmes might have relapsed again must have broken Watson's heart, for it would have signified the end of their relationship.

Holmes, however, is quite aware of this, and rushes to reassure Watson. This alone is ample evidence to suggest that Holmes did indeed give up his habit for Watson. Quite telling, is it not, that Holmes should be so willing to alter his habits merely to appease Watson. Clearly, Watson is the single most important aspect of Holmes' life.

Indeed, this entire story marks a pivotal point in their relationship, for we see that, despite the longevity of their relationship, and the underlying trust and, indeed, love, it is still quite fragile. Recall that, while they have been living together, and likely sharing a bed, for some time, and it would appear as though they are exclusive to one another, they have not yet vocalized their feelings on the subject matter. This would come in time, and yet, until then both men would continue to experience bouts of insecurity. This is quite apparent in Watson's distress, and, indeed, in Holmes' reassurances.

Returning to the story, Holmes explains that he has used his syringe to coat the hind wheel of Dr. Armstrong's carriage in aniseed. This is followed by an introduction to Pompey, the draghound he intends to use in tracking Dr. Armstrong's carriage. He is very careful, however, to attach a lead to Pompey's collar, Holmes stating:

"Well, Pompey, you may not be fast, but I expect you will be too fast for a couple of middle-aged London gentlemen."

While not of particular interest, it is still quite endearing to note that Holmes refers to he and Watson as a couple of middle-aged gentlemen. We begin to see that Holmes fully intends to grow old with Watson.

From here, the case quickly draws to a close, and Holmes soon discovers the cause behind Godfrey Staunton's disappearance. Sadly, this corresponds with the death of Staunton's wife, a woman Staunton went to many lengths to hide from his disapproving uncle. In his final line, Holmes states:

"Come, Watson," said he, and we passed from that house of grief into the pale sunlight

of the winter day.

While saddened by the conclusion of the case, we cannot help but rejoice at the sight of Holmes and Watson, walking arm in arm, into the sunset. Truly a more suggesting ending has yet to be written.

The Abbey Grange

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange* in January of 1897. Watson tells us that it is the winter of 1897, and as Lady Brackenstall, the murdered man's wife, tells Holmes that she has been married exactly a year, January, we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in September of 1904.

Synopsis:

Dr. Watson awakes one morning to find Sherlock Holmes standing next to his bed. It appears as though there has been a murder at Abbey Grange, and Holmes is bent on heading out to give Inspector Stanley Hopkins a hand. His arrival, however, comes as Inspector Hopkins is about to close the case, for the murdered man's wife, Lady Brackenstall, was able to identify her killers; a gang consisting of a father and two sons, operating under the name of Randall. Holmes, however, is not satisfied by this solution, and soon finds himself investigating the case behind Scotland Yard's back. A third wine glass, filled with beeswing, is what eventually leads him to uncover the truth of Lady Brackenstall's mistreatment at the hands of her husband. From there, Holmes is able to track down the sailor who claimed Lady Brackenstall's heart, and although he lets the man go, it is not without first demanding the man's story in full detail.

The Subtext:

It was on a bitterly cold and frosty morning during the winter of '97 that I was awakened by a tugging at my shoulder. It was Holmes.

So begins *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange*, and already we are treated to the somewhat blatant, and entirely domestic, subtext, which is found throughout the later Canon. While the above statement is quite interesting, for it speaks to the intimacy between the two men, and indeed, Holmes' seeming comfort in Watson's bedroom, it is Holmes' statement that truly astounds us.

"The game is afoot. Not a word! Into your clothes and come!"

Reading the above passage, it becomes quite obvious that Watson, much to Holmes' delight, we are sure, sleeps in the nude. It is also quite obvious that Holmes knows this (for he does not seem in the least bit surprised), which suggests that Holmes has spent

a good deal of time in Watson's bedroom, with a naked Watson. While some scholars may suggest that Holmes was referring to Watson's need to change from his night-clothes, here we must point the readers attention to Holmes' cry of *into your clothes*, suggesting that Watson was very much out of his clothes, night or otherwise.

With some confusion and grumbling, Watson does make it from bed, and is able to follow Holmes down the stairs and into a cab. Here Watson tells us:

Holmes nestled in silence into his heavy coat, and I was glad to do the same, for the air was most bitter and neither of us had broken our fast.

This scene is simply breathtaking in its implications. Indeed, one can almost picture Holmes and Watson, curled together in the back of a hansom, Holmes nestled into his heavy coat, Watson glancing over imploringly, only to have Holmes nod his assent, perhaps with a smirk, for he knew Watson well and expected no less. And so Watson would crawl into Holmes' oversized coat to share Holmes' warmth, and touch, as they travelled to Charing Cross Station. Truly a more romantic picture has yet to be painted.

This gesture of intimacy, and indeed, romance, seems to panic Holmes, for a moment later he descends to insulting Watson's work.

"I fancy that every one of his cases has found its way into your collection, and I must admit, Watson, that you have some power of selection which atones for much which I deplore in your narratives. Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over work of the utmost finesse and delicacy in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite, but cannot possibly instruct, the reader."

This is very in keeping with Holmes' character, for it was quite difficult for Holmes to allow Watson access to the confines of his heart. Holmes' walls have formed cracks, though, and while they have yet to crumble, we begin to see their inevitable destruction. He fights, cruelly at times, to maintain his distance; keep himself intact, lest Watson penetrate this barrier and Holmes lose himself completely to the one person capable of breaking his heart. He does not mean his words to be as cutting as they appear, and this is evident in his compliment, buried within his rejection. This is Holmes, simply trying to keep Watson at arm's length (further evidence, we might add, to the fight which strained them in SUSS).

Watson is, naturally, quite hurt by Holmes' comment, although he does not allow

his hurt to linger for long. He asks why Holmes has not chosen to write his cases himself, to which Holmes replies:

"I will, my dear Watson, I will. At present I am, as you know, fairly busy, but I propose to devote my declining years to the composition of a text-book which shall focus the whole art of detection into one volume. Our present research appears to be a case of murder."

We see here a glimpse of Holmes' heart, and the emotions he tries so desperately to keep from Watson. Here Holmes speaks of spending his declining years composing a text-book on deduction, and yet he goes on to reference the research involved as *our research*, a clear indication that Holmes expects Watson to remain a constant presence in his life.

Watson seems to catch this, for immediately he turns his attention back to the case, Holmes' dismissal forgotten. Indeed, it soon becomes obvious that Watson still thinks quite highly of Holmes, for sometime later, after they have interview Lady Brackenstall regarding her husband's death, Watson tells us:

The keen interest had passed out of Holmes's expressive face, and I knew that with the mystery all the charm of the case had departed. There still remained an arrest to be effected, but what were these commonplace rogues that he should soil his hands with them?

Watson's contempt for the commonplace rogues thought responsible for Sir Eustace's death is quite apparent, but it is contempt on Holmes' behalf, a rather curious sentiment, one must agree. Truly, in Watson's eyes, Holmes' position was elevated above mere man. We must note, too, how quickly Watson is able to deduce Holmes' thoughts simply by a shift of his features. Indeed, we begin to see why Watson tolerated Holmes' criticisms, for Watson must have easily seen through Holmes' guise; right to the core of Holmes' heart.

It is the existence of these rogues which first turns Holmes off the case. Truly, if Sir Eustace's death is the result of mere burglary, what is there for Holmes to do? Holmes appears to think so, at least, for he turns to Watson and states:

"Come, Watson, I fancy that we may employ ourselves more profitably at home."

We cannot, of course, agree more, for we are certain that Watson is very much looking forward to returning to the warmth of his bed and his (eventual) slumber.

Sadly, they do not make it back to Watson's bed, or Baker Street at all for that matter, for Holmes is suddenly struck by the curiosity of finding three wine glasses, yet only one filled with beeswing. So strong is this impression, in fact, that Holmes immediately decides to return to Abbey Grange.

At last, by a sudden impulse, just as our train was crawling out of a suburban station, he sprang on to the platform and pulled me out after him.

We cannot help but note here that Holmes refuses to return without his Watson, going so far as to tempt death and personal injury (on both their behalves) in order to secure Watson and return to the scene of the crime.

It is there that Holmes begins his investigation in earnest. After a thorough investigation of the house, and a second interview with Lady Brackenstall, Holmes and Watson take their leave, but not before:

There was a pond in the park, and to this my friend led the way.

Remarkable, is it not, that Holmes continues to take time out of his cases so that he and Watson might take romantic walks in the park.

In truth, it is to examine the hole in the ice which led Holmes to this pond, and while the student of subtext will maintain that Holmes' motives were not entirely case based, we must accept this fact, for it leads Holmes to his final conclusion and the conclusion of the case.

The case comes to a close in Baker Street, but not before Inspector Hopkins arrives to confirm Holmes' suspicion; that the thieves did indeed throw their loot into the pond. Holmes does not tell Hopkins his theory, leaving the Inspector to head back to Scotland Yard empty-handed. At this, Holmes comments to Watson that he has treated Stanley Hopkins rather badly. Watson's response, one must agree, is quite telling:

"I trust your judgment."

Holmes has lied to Scotland Yard, without explaining his reasoning, and yet Watson merely states that he trusts Holmes' judgment. While Watson does know Holmes well enough to trust in his professional judgment, we cannot help but feel Watson infers a trust beyond professional capacity. This will become quite apparent in a few moments, for Holmes has arranged for the true murderer to arrive at Baker Street. Upon his arrival, Watson tells us:

There was a sound upon the stairs, and our door was opened to admit as fine a specimen of manhood as ever passed through it.

While not of particular interest in terms of Holmes and Watson subtext, we include this line and wonder: Oh, Watson, did you really think you were fooling your public?

Returning to Holmes and Watson, and Watson's implicit trust, it is shortly after Captain Crocker arrives that Holmes convinces him to share his side of the story. Upon hearing his reasoning, Holmes decides that justice is best served in letting Crocker go.

We note here that Watson does not disagree, or even disapprove, despite the fact that Holmes is clearly breaking the law (and making Watson an accomplice in the process). Indeed, Watson even agrees to fulfil the role of jury:

“Watson, you are a British jury, and I never met a man who was more eminently fitted to represent one.”

A fitting compliment from Holmes, one must agree. On occasion, Holmes does indeed reveal the depth of his feelings. It is quite clear here that Holmes respects Watson, Holmes elevating Watson to the ideal of the legal process he holds so dear. We are not surprised, then, when Watson decrees Crocker not guilty.

Indeed, we are not surprised at all by the conclusion of the case, for this is not the first time in which Holmes has allowed a guilty man to walk free. Holmes seeks justice, and should that justice be in conflict with the law, then Holmes is more than willing to break that law to see justice done. This case, however, provides ample evidence that Holmes can be persuaded by love, too, for it is only with the certainty that Crocker acted out of love that Holmes makes his decision. Time and time again we see Holmes siding on the side of love, and this is not an action taken by men incapable of the emotion. Truly Holmes has loved, and does love, and we cannot doubt that, shortly after Crocker's leaving, Holmes and Watson were finally able to return to the warmth of Watson's bed.

There is one final element to examine in this case, for it occurs several times throughout Canon, and we begin to see a pattern forming. The story of Captain Crocker and Lady Brackenstall, and the murder of Sir Eustace, comes about due, in part, to the laws of England, which, at the time, forbade divorce (in most circumstances). We see this theme crop up on several occasions, at one point Watson referring to the deplorable laws of England (DEVI). It is curious, too, that Watson should include so many cases which highlighted the injustice of British law. One wonders, then, if Watson's decision to include these cases came as a direct result of his own failed marriage, and his own desire to divorce. We have suggested before that Watson's marriage was not ended by Mary's death, but rather, by Mary's leaving. Could it be, then, that Watson was still, in every legal capacity, married to Mary, and incapable of obtaining a divorce?

The Devil's Foot

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot* in March of 1897. Watson collaborates this date, telling us that the story took place in the spring of 1897, and then thrice mentioning the month of March. The story was first published in December of 1910.

Synopsis:

When Sherlock Holmes' constitution takes a turn for the worse, Watson forces him to take an extended vacation in the country. Holmes goes only reluctantly, but his spirits are soon lifted, for shortly into their visit to Cornwall a sinister murder is committed. Holmes and Watson's neighbour, Mr. Mortimer Tregennis, then seeks Holmes' aid in uncovering what devilry has claimed the life of his sister, and the sanity of his two brothers. Despite Watson's objections, Holmes takes up the case, and soon discovers that what should be elementary is actually quite complex. It'll take a second murder (this time Mr. Mortimer Tregennis himself) before Holmes has enough evidence to piece together the final solution. Proving his findings, however, is another matter all together, and Holmes' experiment, with what is later revealed to be a substance called Devil's Foot, comes dangerously close to costing both him and Watson their lives.

The Subtext:

In recording from time to time some of the curious experiences and interesting recollections which I associate with my long and intimate friendship with Mr. Sherlock Holmes...

Watson's introduction to *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot* is quite apropos, for this story marks a shift in Watson's long and intimate relationship with Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, as the story progresses, Holmes and Watson's bond will continue to strengthen until at long last they are finally set upon the path which will lead them to open declarations of love and affection. The story, therefore, is quite pivotal in terms of their relationship, for, while still guarded, Holmes is no longer able to hide the true depth of his feelings for Watson.

We will return to this in a moment (and indeed, throughout the story) but first we must examine a very interesting statement. Watson tells us:

It was, then, with considerable surprise that I received a telegram from Homes last Tuesday [in 1910, thereabouts] --he has never been known to write where a telegram would serve...

This story was first published in 1910, some seven years into Holmes' retirement, and Watson would have us believe that Holmes was living a peaceful, if isolated, existence in Sussex, while Watson remained apart, in London. It is your author's opinion (and we shall return to this theory as we continue to examine the later Canon, for it becomes quite apparent) that Watson is, in fact, lying. Holmes did not telegram at all, for Holmes had no need; Watson, we will demonstrate, accompanied Holmes to Sussex where the pair lived out their retirement together.

Curious, though, is it not, that Watson should specify that Holmes sent his request via telegram. One would imagine, even if Holmes did mistrust the invention, that by 1910 Holmes would have adopted the modern convenience of the telephone. He certainly used it often enough during the later years in Baker Street (RETI).

With this in mind, let us turn now to an additional theory; that of Holmes' cocaine use, and the years Watson spent attempting to wean Holmes from the drug.

It was, then, in the spring of the year 1897 that Holmes's iron constitution showed some symptoms of giving way in the face of constant hard work of a most exacting kind, aggravated, perhaps, by occasional indiscretions of his own.

Note Watson's comment concerning Holmes' occasional indiscretion. We begin to see here an interesting theme, which runs throughout the stories set in 1896 and 1897. Indeed, it is during this window that Watson refers to Holmes' cocaine use, and it is during this period of time that Holmes and Watson's relationship seems most strained. It is not difficult to imagine, then, that it was during this time that Holmes first attempted to set aside his damaging habit.

Holmes' return is dated in the spring of 1894, and we first hear confirmation of Holmes' weaning from cocaine in December of 1896 (MISS). While Watson does not mention Holmes' cocaine use prior to this, this does not necessarily imply that Holmes had quit before his return (EMPT). Indeed, several cases prior to the hiatus do not mention cocaine, despite evidence of prior, and later, use.

We can therefore safely suggest that it was some time after Holmes' return that Watson first sought to aid Holmes in setting aside his addiction, and that that process was not without its difficulties. Indeed, we see several relapses (via Watson's references) in both 1896 and 1897. In fact, it is your author's opinion that it was Dr. Moore Agar

(see below) who aided Watson in his quest to wean Holmes from the drug mania which once threatened his career:

In March of that year Dr. Moore Agar, of Harley Street, whose dramatic introduction to Holmes I may some day recount...

And so it was Dr. Agar who suggested a visit to the country so that Holmes might avoid yet another series of relapses. Although we do not doubt that Watson has threatened to leave at this point, we know Watson far too well to expect him to keep his word. Indeed, he cannot possibly leave Holmes, and so he continues to seek the means to free Holmes from his addiction once and for all. Holmes' fragile constitution, then, is directly tied to years (indeed, decades) worth of drug abuse.

That Watson would go to such lengths, and sacrifice so much to save his Holmes is quite touching. Truly, Holmes was an exceedingly lucky man.

Thus it was that in the early spring of that year we found ourselves together in a small cottage near Poldhu Bay, at the further extremity of the Cornish peninsula.

That Watson should care enough for Holmes' wellbeing to secure a small cottage on the Cornish peninsula, where the pair might eke out their days in solitude (save for one another's company) is also quite suggestive.

Indeed, from the moment they arrive, despite Holmes' ill health, they fall instantly into a life of blissful domesticity. Watson tells us:

From the windows of our little whitewashed house, which stood high upon a grassy headland, we looked down upon the whole sinister semicircle of Mounts Bay...

Particular attention should be drawn to Watson's description of *our little whitewashed house*.

Watson seems quite pleased by country life, and eventually Holmes is able to take some solace in it. It is not long, then, before his health begins to improve, and we soon see hints of Holmes of old.

He had received a consignment of books upon philology and was settling down to develop this thesis when suddenly, to my sorrow and to his unfeigned delight, we found ourselves, even in that land of dreams, plunged into a problem at our very doors which was more intense, more engrossing, and infinitely more mysterious than any of those which had driven us from London.

The above sentence, in addition to demonstrating Holmes' slow recovery, hints at what is to come, for the instant Holmes hears of a potential new case Watson slips into the role of overprotective husband.

I glared at the intrusive vicar with no very friendly eyes...

So much, so, in fact, that he is willing to glare at a member of the cloth (the man responsible for intruding upon their solitude).

When Watson is not scowling at those who invaded their sanctuary, he is busy observing Holmes; seeming to hover at Holmes' side, taking particular care to watch for signs of strain.

...but never once did I see that sudden brightening of his eyes and tightening of his lips which would have told me that he saw some gleam of light in this utter darkness.

Indeed, the whole of Watson's behaviour borders on paranoia and one can easily imagine the terror contained within Watson's breast; that he might yet lose Holmes, after all he had done.

Holmes seems to sense this, for he is quick to reassure Watson, and takes rest when the case comes to a standstill.

My friend smiled and laid his hand upon my arm. "I think, Watson, that I shall resume that course of tobacco-poisoning which you have so often and so justly condemned," said he.

Slowly, Watson's fears seem to lessen, and this has much to do with Holmes' mood; Holmes appears more relaxed than he has in the past, and despite the presence of a case, he still seems whole and healthy. Indeed, even faced with the frustration of not enough evidence, Holmes does not retreat into the darkness of his thoughts, but rather, suggests that he and Watson engage in physical activity.

"It won't do, Watson!" said he with a laugh. "Let us walk along the cliffs together and search for flint arrows."

There is such open boyishness in the above statement, and we cannot help but note the drastic shift in Holmes mood. It becomes obvious, then, that without or without his newfound case, Holmes is quite content to spend his vacation in quiet pursuits with Watson at his side. Your author would also like to note Holmes' suggestion that he and Watson walk along the isolated cliffs so that they might search for phallic shaped objects.

Outdoor sex aside, Holmes continues to reassure Watson, going out of his way to relieve any residual worries Watson might be carrying.

"Meanwhile, we shall put the case aside until more accurate data are available, and devote the rest of our morning to the pursuit of Neolithic man."

It would appear, then, as if Holmes has truly come to an understanding, for the

whole of Holmes' actions can be interpreted as his desire to appease and comfort a distinctly worried Watson. We will not, of course, comment on Holmes' apparently kinky tendencies.

Holmes' attempts to reassure Watson eventually work, for as the case progresses Watson's anxieties lessen. Watson even goes so far as to agree, without question, to participate in what is undoubtedly the most dangerous experiment in all of Canon.

Upon discovering that Mr. Mortimer Tregennis has fallen victim to whatever it was that killed his sister and drove his brothers insane, and that in both circumstances combustion was taking place in a stuffy atmosphere, Holmes' thoughts immediately turn to poison. He discovers a residual powder in the home of Dr. Tregennis, which he suspects to be the substance responsible for the destruction of what is now the entire Tregennis family. His supposition, however, is inconclusive, and so Holmes must test the substance by recreating the atmosphere in which they found Tregennis' body.

Watson, upon hearing of Holmes' intentions, expresses some alarm, to which Holmes offers Watson the option of leaving, Holmes offering to complete the experiment in solitude. Watson, naturally, refuses to leave Holmes' side, to which Holmes replies:

"I thought I knew my Watson."

Recall that Holmes is intending to recreate an atmosphere which has killed two people. In doing this, he is willingly risking his own life (and Watson's) and yet Watson remains. Watson knows that, although Holmes will not begrudge him his leaving, if he were to leave, Holmes would simply conduct the experiment on own his. In an effort to keep Holmes safe, Watson willingly risks his life (and sanity) just so that he can prevent any ill from befalling Holmes. If this is not love, I do not know what is.

Or perhaps I do, for Watson's role in this strange experiment, and indeed, his love for Holmes, takes an interesting twist. As the poison begins its work, Watson tells us:

At the same moment, in some effort of escape, I broke through that cloud of despair and had a glimpse of Holmes's face, white, rigid, and drawn with horror — the very look which I had seen upon the features of the dead. It was that vision which gave me an instant of sanity and of strength.

Watson, overcome by a drug which has killed two and rendered another two insensible, is able to overcome its effects simply by the force of his concern for Holmes' well being. Remarkable. Truly remarkable, and we must cite this as extreme proof of the depths of Watson's feelings for Holmes. Indeed, Watson then goes on to tell us:

I dashed from my chair, threw my arms round Holmes, and together we lurched through

the door, and an instant afterwards had thrown ourselves down upon the grass plot and were lying side by side, conscious only of the glorious sunshine which was bursting its way through the hellish cloud of terror which had girt us in.

Such a feat of strength and determination, and yet it should not have occurred, for Watson should have been rendered senseless by the choking poison. Watson, however, was able to rally against this and defeat its sinister intents (even when Holmes could not) solely by the strength of his need to save Holmes. The implications behind Watson's actions are staggering. Any doubt as to the depths of Watson's feelings for Holmes are now officially vanquished.

Watson's affections, however, do not go unreciprocated, for Holmes is just as concerned for Watson's safety.

Slowly it rose from our souls like the mists from a landscape until peace and reason had returned, and we were sitting upon the grass, wiping our clammy foreheads, and looking with apprehension at each other to mark the last traces of that terrific experience which we had undergone.

One can almost picture the scene Watson dare not write; Holmes and Watson, looking at one another in apprehension, running careful fingers over each other so that they might reassure one another of their vitality.

In fact, it is here that we are first treated to a glimpse of the true depth of Holmes' emotions.

"Upon my word, Watson!" said Holmes at last with an unsteady voice, "I owe you both my thanks and an apology. It was an unjustifiable experiment even for one's self, and doubly so for a friend. I am really very sorry."

Holmes' heartfelt apology, and the horror within his tone as he realizes what he has just put Watson through; to see Holmes so shaken over the affair and to know that it is Watson's welfare that concerns Holmes is truly a mark of how deep Holmes' affections for Watson run. Indeed, Watson is so moved by Holmes' words that he is driven to state:

"You know," I answered with some emotion, for I had never seen so much of Holmes's heart before, "that it is my greatest joy and privilege to help you."

This moment is perhaps the most touching in all of Canon, for we are given undeniable proof of Holmes' love for Watson, and, indeed, of Watson's love for Holmes. That Watson would do anything for Holmes is not surprising; that Holmes should reveal so large a piece of his heart is truly remarkable.

It soon becomes obvious that Holmes is much overwhelmed by Watson's words, for Watson tells us:

He relapsed at once into the half-humorous, half-cynical vein which was his habitual attitude to those about him.

An obvious attempt on Holmes' behalf to lighten the atmosphere, lest the strength of his emotions overcome his usually reserved nature.

Once Holmes has recovered, and he and Watson have aired out the poisonous atmosphere that has become their country cottage, Holmes once again turns his attention back to the case. He has arranged for Dr. Leon Sterndale to attend them at the cottage, where Holmes, upon Sterndale's arrival, immediately accuses the man of murder.

For a moment I wished that I were armed. Sterndale's fierce face turned to a dusky red, his eyes glared, and the knotted, passionate veins started out in his forehead, while he sprang forward with clenched hands towards my companion.

Sterndale does not, of course, take the accusation well. Here, however, we wish to note Watson's language, and, indeed, his protective nature. Watson's reference to Holmes as *my companion* is quite amusing, for we can well imagine that, perhaps twice, Watson wrote *my Holmes* and was then forced to cross it out. Either way, Watson's desire to protect his long-time friend and companion is quite obvious.

Sterndale does not, of course, assault Holmes, and Holmes is soon able to extract a full confession from Sterndale. After hearing Sterndale's story (one of love, and bitter familial betrayal), Holmes decides to let Sterndale go. This is not the first time we have been witness to Holmes' willingness to break English law so that justice might prevail. It is quite interesting, however, to note that, in this occasion, as in every past occasion, it is a tale of love that stays Holmes' hand. Clearly Holmes knew of love, for why else should he have been so moved?

And so, as Watson writes:

"You would not denounce the man?"

"Certainly not," I answered.

"I have never loved, Watson, but if I did and if the woman I loved had met such an end, I might act even as our lawless lion-hunter has done."

We begin to suspect an alteration, for we know the truth of the matter, and very much doubt that Holmes would have been capable of so bold a lie. Indeed, it is quite easy to imagine that Holmes' actual words were thus:

"I have never loved a woman, Watson."

It is easy, too, to imagine that it was Watson who made this slight change, so as to shield both he and Holmes from public speculation. That Holmes has loved in not in doubt, for too often now we have seen a glimpse of his great heart, and in each of those incidences, Watson was the cause.

Holmes himself collaborates this theory, for his next words:

“Well, Watson, I will not offend your intelligence by explaining what is obvious.”

It is safe to say, then, that Holmes’ original statement read as follows:

“I have never loved [a woman], Watson, but if I did and if the woman I loved had met such an end, I might act even as our lawless lion-hunter has done. Who knows? Well, Watson, I will not offend your intelligence by explaining what is obvious [that I have, in fact, loved a man].”

Truly Holmes is making great leaps and bounds towards confessing the whole of his heart, and as the case comes to a close, we see Holmes and Watson falling back into the domestic life which so well suited them, Holmes suggesting:

“And now, my dear Watson, I think we may dismiss the matter from our mind and go back with a clear conscience to the study of those Chaldean roots which are surely to be traced in the Cornish branch of the great Celtic speech.”

On a final note, it is once again of interest to note that, like ABBE, *The Adventure of the Devil’s Foot* centres around the theme of divorce, and the deplorable laws of England which prevented many an unhappy marriage from finding absolution.

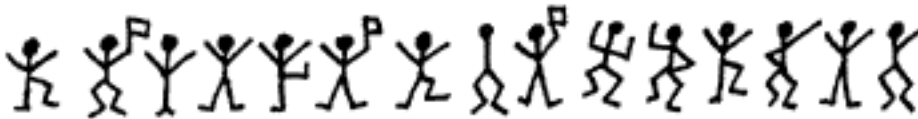
The Dancing Men

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Dancing Men* in July/August of 1898. Watson does not give us a date, but does mention that the case takes place a month after the end of June. Baring-Gould bases his year assumption on Mr. Hilton Cubitt's statement that he met his wife one year prior during the Jubilee. The Diamond Jubilee would have taken place in 1897, making 1898 the year.

There is, however, a problem with Baring-Gould's date. The interaction between Holmes and Watson is not reminiscent of a later case. Indeed, the story begins with Holmes deducing to Watson's amazement; a scene very reminiscing of Holmes and Watson's early relationship. As the Golden Jubilee took place in 1887, we therefore suggest that this case took place prior to the hiatus (and, indeed, Watson's marriage) in July/August of 1888 (a period of time which holds no recorded cases). The story was first published in December of 1903.

Synopsis:



The Subtext:

Throughout this series, we have attempted to examine Holmes and Watson's relationship in chronological order. As we have dismissed Baring-Gould's date (and indeed, set this story some ten years prior) its context does not fit within our current timeframe. In order to fully examine the subtext contained within, we must examine its true place within Holmes and Watson's chronological relationship.

We date *The Adventure of the Dancing Men* in July/August of 1888. This would place the events in the story some time before the events contained within *The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter*. Recall that Holmes and Watson have been living together for seven years, and that Watson has not yet married (or, indeed, even met Miss Morstan). There is evidence to suggest that a physical relationship existed between the two men as early as January, 1888 (but in all likelihood, physical relations began before this

date) and so we can safely say that Holmes and Watson were likely quite familiar with one another during this story.

That being said, Holmes was likely still quite reserved, Watson quite unnerved, and it should be noted that a little over a month after the events in this story, Holmes and Watson quarrel, leading Watson to fall instantly in love with a female client, who later became his wife (we refer here, of course, to Miss Morstan from SIGN).

Having sorted out the issue of chronology, we can now turn our attention back to the story.

The story begins with Holmes' startling deduction regarding Watson's financial intentions. Watson, naturally, is quite amazed, and we see here a scene which is very familiar given Holmes and Watson's early relationship. Indeed, it was during this period of time when Holmes was still trying (quite desperately at times) to impress Watson (a Holmesian form of courtship, no doubt). It is in, however, Holmes' explanation to Watson that we are given our first hints of subtext. Indeed, Holmes tells Watson:

"Your cheque-book is locked in my drawer, and you have not asked for the key."

Curious, is it not, that Watson (who, by all outside accounts is merely Holmes' roommate) should entrust Holmes with his chequebook. While this statement has led scholars to suggest everything from a gambling problem to a drinking problem, we suggest here that it was Holmes who controlled the money in Baker Street; Holmes and Watson dividing domestic responsibilities, seemingly at random, as most couples of the day would have done.

This domestic scene is soon interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Hilton Cubitt, who relays the story of the dancing men, and requests Holmes' aid in discovering the meaning behind these child-like drawings which have been scrawled on various surfaces across his property. Holmes agrees, but can make no move without further evidence, and so, several weeks pass before the case is able to move forward.

He made no allusion to the affair, however, until one afternoon a fortnight or so later. I was going out when he called me back.

"You had better stay here, Watson."

In decoding Holmes and Watson's earlier adventures, we noted a reoccurring theme in Holmes' increasing dependency on Watson. We see this again here, for already Holmes is unwilling to move forward on the case without Watson's aid.

Upon Watson's question as to Holmes' reasons for wanting him to stay, Holmes explains that he has had a wire from Mr. Cubitt and is expecting him, and his dancing

men, imminently. It is during Mr. Cubitt's narrative that we are treated to another theme commonly found in early Canon. Watson, ever observing Holmes, tells us:

...and I could see by his eyes that he was much excited...

Watson's seeming obsession with Holmes eyes did not disappear entirely in the later Canon, but it is entirely more prevalent in the earlier stories.

It is quite interesting to note, too, Watson's ability to read Holmes' mood, a talent Watson seems to have acquired quite early on. Indeed, as the story continues, we begin to see the profound connection which formed between the two men even in the earliest phase of their intimacy.

Sherlock Holmes preserved his calm professional manner until our visitor had left us, although it was easy for me, who knew him so well, to see that he was profoundly excited.

While Watson could not claim to know Holmes as well as he would after Holmes' return, it is quite obvious that their bond was already quite strong.

That is not to say that Watson has set aside his seeming obsession with Holmes, for it is here, in the earlier days of their intimacy, that Watson seems most obsessed with the man.

For two hours I watched him as he covered sheet after sheet of paper with figures and letters, so completely absorbed in his task that he had evidently forgotten my presence.

That Watson should spend two hours watching Holmes work is quite indicative of how enthralled Watson had become.

We do note, however, that Watson has been working with Holmes for some time (seven years, in fact) for he seems to know Holmes (and Holmes' methods) quite well. So well, in fact, that Watson tells us:

I confess that I was filled with curiosity, but I was aware that Holmes liked to make his disclosures at his own time and in his own way; so I waited until it should suit him to take me into his confidence.

We must also commend Watson for his patience.

This insight continues, as does Watson's obsession (and observation), Watson seemingly incapable of taking his eyes off of Holmes.

Seldom have I seen him so utterly despondent.

We must note, too, that the above statement is highly suggestive of an earlier date. Holmes' black reaction to failure was far more prevalent in the earlier half of his career.

Holmes' black mood comes in response to the news that Mr. Cubitt is dead, his

wife suspected in his murder, but lying gravely injured herself. While quite distraught over the death of his client, Holmes is able to rally, and soon begins investigating Mr. Cubitt's death. In short order Holmes is able to put the pieces together, and, after sending off a note to a nearby farmhouse, Holmes tells Watson:

"As to you, friend Watson, I owe you every atonement for having allowed your natural curiosity to remain so long unsatisfied."

We must note here Holmes apology, for it would appear as though Holmes already depends enough upon Watson (and Watson's companionship) to strive to keep Watson happy. We must note, too, Holmes' use of the word *friend*, which is again very indicative of Holmes and Watson's relationship during the late 1880s.

Further proof of Holmes' dependence on Watson can be seen just as the case is coming to a close. Holmes, in explaining his presence to the local inspector, states:

"I at once came to Norfolk with my friend and colleague, Dr. Watson, but, unhappily, only in time to find that the worst had already occurred."

And we cannot help but note that Holmes is particular to mention arriving with Watson. Truly, Holmes, at this point, is quite unwilling to work without his Watson.

Nor is he willing to pass on an opportunity to amuse himself at Watson's expense. It is shortly after the arrest of the true killer, whom Holmes has summed using a note encoded with the dancing men, that Holmes, tossing the note to Watson, states:

"See if you can read it, Watson," said he, with a smile.

Again, we are privy to the teasing nature common during the earlier years of their intimacy. We must also note Holmes' faith in Watson's intelligence, for while he does jest, we cannot help but note Holmes' certainty; that Watson could, in all likelihood, decode the message, were he given enough time.

And so the case comes to an end, Holmes suggesting they return to Baker Street, and the comforts of domestic life:

"And so, my dear Watson, we have ended by turning the dancing men to good when they have so often been the agents of evil, and I think that I have fulfilled my promise of giving you something unusual for your notebook. Three-forty is our train, and I fancy we should be back in Baker Street for dinner."

Finally, we must examine Holmes' promise of finding something unusual for Watson's notebook. Although Watson has only published the one novel, Holmes was only too aware of Watson's intention to document more. Indeed, Holmes seems quite pleased to have earned a biographer, in addition to a friend and companion.

The Retired Colourman

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Retired Colourman* in July of 1898 (coincidentally, the same month in which he dates *The Dancing Men*, lending weight to an earlier dating for *DANC*). As Holmes states that it has been two years since the colourman's retirement, and that he had retired in 1896, Baring-Gould's date seems quite reasonable. The story was first published in December of 1926, and marks the completion of *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes is commissioned by a retired art supplier named Josiah Amberley to look into the disappearance of his wife. She is believed to have run off with their neighbour, a Dr. Ray Ernest, the pair taking with them a sizeable quantity of cash and securities. Holmes, though initially uninterested in the case, soon discovers that Amberley is not all that he seems. The key to solving the case, Holmes realizes, rests within Amberley's home, so, as Holmes knows that he won't be granted easy access, he sends Amberley out of the city (under Watson's watchful eye) so that Holmes might burgle the house and discover the true reason for Watson's reported paint fumes. A windowless room and a disconnected gas line make for an easy solution.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Retired Colourman opens shortly after the leaving of a prospective client. Holmes seems in a particularly dark mood, and after asking for Watson's opinion of the man, states:

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

Here, we cannot help but question the possible cause for Holmes' melancholy. Were he and Watson fighting? Had their steady flow of clients dwindled, leaving Holmes without work? Or was this simply a matter of timing; Holmes trapped in the Victorian era with one hundred years between him and the invention of Viagra? Indeed, Holmes would have been nearing his forty-fifth birthday, and given his unhealthy lifestyle, and

the copious amounts of tobacco he consumed, not to mention his prior cocaine addiction, it is quite easy to imagine that the passion which once consumed them had somewhat lessened.

Or perhaps we might suggest that it is the tale of his new client which has upset him. Josiah Amberley was once a man of prospects --a young wife, a successful career at his back, a long and well earned retirement in his future-- and yet, upon leaving Baker Street, Holmes cannot remark:

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

One wonders if Holmes felt the coming of age, and knew that his time was drawing near. One wonders, too, if Holmes worried that he might lose Watson should he abandon his practice. It is highly unlikely that Holmes had planned for his retirement by this point, but had he even once considered the possibility of leaving London, it is without doubt that he would have considered, too, whether Watson would accompany him.

Watson does not seem bothered by Holmes mood, and, indeed, is able to draw Holmes into the case by asking a flurry of questions. This seems to please Holmes, and he soon offers over a gesture of complete trust and intimacy.

"Well, the immediate question, my dear Watson, happens to be, what will you do? — if you will be good enough to understudy me."

For the first time in all of Canon, Holmes has given over an entire case to Watson's capable hands. That Holmes should have such faith is a mark of their decades-long relationship, and the trust which had grown between them.

And so Watson heads out to begin his investigation, returning much later to give Holmes an account of how the proceedings are moving along. Watson tells us:

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

Watson's description of Holmes here is quite remarkable. Note Holmes' gaunt figure stretched out in his chair, the smoke from his pipe circling his brow like a crown. Note too the lazy, languid expression on his face, and, finally, his bright gray eyes, transfix-

ing Watson with their gaze. The entirety of Watson's description is incredibly erotic; so much so, in fact, that we can automatically discount Holmes' need for artificial stimulants.

As Watson continues his narrative, we see that he has made a careful study of his surroundings. Indeed, he describes the setting in such exacting detail that Holmes is driven to protest.

"Cut out the poetry, Watson," said Holmes severely.

It would appear as though Holmes' sour mood has returned, and while there still remains a dozen or so probable explanations, here we will suggest only one. Watson, it would appear, is the victim of Holmes' jealousy. While at first glance, this may seem a preposterous notion, as we continue with the story, we begin to see growing evidence that this may, in fact, be the case.

Recall that the underlying plot of the tale is a relatively simple one. Mr. Amberley's wife, having committed infidelity with a neighbour, Dr. Ernest, has supposedly run off with her lover. As Watson has quite the reputation of being a lady's man (an entirely fabricated reputation, mind you) it is quite easy to imagine (and indeed, we have seen it often) that Watson was perhaps a little too friendly with a recent female client.

Holmes would have naturally noticed, and it is quite possible that the incident brought to mind Watson's first meeting with Mary Morstan. Holmes had lost Watson once to a woman, and now, faced with the (imagined, for Watson was merely being polite, we are sure) prospect of losing Watson a second time, it is quite understandable that Holmes should simultaneously attempt to demonstrate his trust and regard for Watson (i.e. the handing over of a case), while building protective walls by snipping at Watson over the smallest provocations.

Indeed, that this story takes place over a year after the events in *The Devil's Foot*, it is safe to say that Holmes, still new to the intimacies of what is now quite the serious relationship, was likely quite fearful of losing it all. His hand was dealt, after all, and with no remaining cards, Holmes was out of his element.

In order to further demonstrate this theory, we must examine Holmes' behaviour. First we shall examine Holmes' attempts to demonstrate his trust (and, indeed, respect) for Watson. Here we see that, in the midst of Watson's narrative, Holmes is quite quick to dole out praise:

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

By letting Watson know that Holmes is interested in his impression, Holmes is essentially validating Watson's position in his [Holmes'] life. Holmes places great value on Watson's opinion, because Holmes places great value on Watson.

"That is remarkable — most remarkable," said Holmes, whose interest in the case seemed to be rising. "Pray continue, Watson. I find your narrative most arresting."

Here we seem Holmes acknowledging the fact that Watson is a good storyteller. Perhaps their last female client was a fan of Watson's writing?

Sadly, Holmes is not quite able to give Watson uninterrupted praise, for in truth Watson has missed a good many things. As Holmes informs Watson of his errors, Watson appears quite hurt, to which Holmes states:

"Don't be hurt, my dear fellow. You know that I am quite impersonal. No one else would have done better. Some possibly not so well."

Holmes' attempt to reassure Watson here is quite endearing. Indeed, Holmes would not be Holmes were he to refrain from pointing out another's foibles. Given that Holmes is also not one for apologies, it is quite remarkable that Watson should earn one.

We return now to our suggestion that it was Watson's attentions towards a female (client or otherwise) which first caused Holmes' sour mood. If we use this as a working hypothesis, then we should bear witness to several barbed remarks on Holmes' behalf which allude to the incident. Lo and behold, they appear:

With your natural advantages, Watson, every lady is your helper and accomplice. What about the girl at the post-office, or the wife of the greengrocer? I can picture you whispering soft nothings with the young lady at the Blue Anchor, and receiving hard somethings in exchange.

Curious, is it not, that Holmes should make such a remark. There is a touch of cynicism in this statement, and, indeed, a touch of bitterness. We cannot help but suspect that Holmes is speaking more to the past than to the present. While we have no doubt that Holmes would indeed pimp Watson's *natural advantages* in order to obtain his desired result, we suspect that the bulk of this statement was meant to be taken as sarcasm.

Indeed, Holmes must feel as if he has gone too far, for a moment later he remarks:

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

Remarkable, these mood swings of Holmes'; first he praises Watson, then he insults him, then he snarks at him, and finally, changing course completely, he invites Watson out on a date. Clearly, whatever has passed between the two men shall undoubtedly result in a set of cold sheets come evening.

We can only hope that a night on the town brightens Holmes' mood, and returns the pair to the domestic bliss we are certain followed the events in Cornwall (DEVI).

The night passes, and with the arrival of morning, we see that Holmes and Watson have indeed made amends. Watson tells us:

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

While one might be tempted to point to Watson's waking to an empty bed as a sign that not all is well in Baker Street, the presence of a note instantly dismisses the theory. That Holmes, waking early and not wanting to disturb Watson, should leave a note is an argument in favour of their married bliss. Indeed, the note itself is quite scandalous (and may come in to play in the decoding of Charles Augustus Milverton), for Holmes writes:

I would only ask you to be on hand about three o'clock, as I conceive it possible that I may want you.

We can only boggle at Holmes' audacity; scheduling sex, for the middle of the afternoon, through a not very carefully concealed note. Dearest, Holmes; have a care.

Shortly after Holmes' return (and their scheduled appointment, we have no doubt), Holmes informs Watson that he has arranged for Amberley's arrival. This comes swiftly, as it appears Amberley has received an unusual telegram, beckoning him to Essex with all due haste. Holmes tells Amberley that he should go, and arranges for Watson to travel with him. It is only later that we learn of Holmes' ruse; for it was he who sent Amberley the telegram.

Holmes suspects Amberley guilty of having killed his wife and her lover, and so he sends Watson away with the man, to a small town where Watson will be forced to spend the night (likely in the same room as Amberley). While others have remarked at Watson's misuse here, we would like to suggest that this is, in fact, a great compliment to Watson. Again, Holmes is demonstrating his trust, for who else but Watson could Holmes entrust to keep Amberley occupied. Indeed, it is Watson's actions here which in the end allow Holmes to piece together enough evidence to solve the case.

The next day, Watson and Amberley return, and, upon arriving at Amberley's resi-

dence, Holmes immediately demands to know where Amberley has stashed the bodies. Eventually, after a suicide-attempted confession, Amberley is escorted to Scotland Yard, and upon Holmes' return, Holmes, in reference to the third man involved in the case, states:

"You had not met Barker, Watson. He is my hated rival upon the Surrey shore."

Holmes' hated rival. Perhaps not a woman, then; and perhaps Watson did, in fact, know Barker. We do not, of course, doubt Watson's loyalty to Holmes, and yet, witnessing Watson meeting a second private detective, Watson showing even the barest hint of chivalry, would have likely worried Holmes gravely.

Holmes seems quite over his insecurity by this point (we can well imagine that Watson is quite reassuring in the bedroom), and finally seems to realize how poorly he has used Watson during this adventure. He states:

"I'll show you first how it was done, and then I will give the explanation which is due to you, and even more to my long-suffering friend here, who has been invaluable throughout."

A rare and heart-warming compliment, to be sure, and not without its due, for Holmes' entire case can be built on Watson's work. Holmes owed Watson this apology and more, and it is quite touching to see that Holmes now knows this, and is more than willing to admit his fault. Truly, Holmes has grown, and we cannot doubt that this came after a long, and for the most part secure, relationship with Watson.

As the case comes to a close, we have but one final note. Holmes, some days later, back in Baker Street, tosses Watson the public account of the case, stating:

"You can file it in our archives, Watson. Some day the true story may be told."

Here we cannot help but note that Holmes refers to his work, and Watson's writing, as *ours*. It is quite relieving to note that this case ends, as all cases should, with Holmes and Watson, once again happily ensconced in domestic life.

It should, of course, be pointed out that the theories contained within are simply that; theories. It is also entirely probable that Holmes was merely having a bad day. Perhaps Watson had stolen the covers for the fourth time that week and Holmes had grown tired of objecting. The reason behind Holmes' mood is far less important than the underlying strength of Holmes and Watson's relationship. It is quite apparent throughout *The Retired Colourman* that Holmes' mood holds no sway with Watson. Indeed, Watson, ever in love with Holmes, simply dismisses it out of hand, waiting for the dawning of a new day, and a new mood. Trivial matters and arguments do not seem

to lessen the bond they share, and so it is safe to assume that Holmes and Watson's relationship was as sound as the art of deduction.

Charles Augustus Milverton

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton* in January of 1899. Watson states that he has omitted the date due to the sensitive nature of the case, telling us only that it was a cold, frosty winter's evening. CHAR is hotly contested by chroniclers, some dating the story as early as 1882, some as late as 1903. While we will examine the story's placement in chronology throughout our analysis, it is your author's opinion that it took place sometime before the hiatus. *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton* was first published in March of 1904.

Synopsis:

In *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton*, Holmes is hired by a young debutante to negotiate the terms of her blackmail. Holmes, hoping to spare his client scandal, and the break-up of her engagement, parleys reluctantly with a Mr. Charles Augustus Milverton, known blackmailer and, according to Holmes, the worst man in London, but is unable to agree on satisfactory terms. This leaves Holmes without recourse, and so, despite knowing the move will set him on the wrong side of the law, Holmes resolves to burgle Mr. Milverton's home, hoping in the process to retrieve his client's letters. Holmes' plan, however, goes awry when both he and Watson are interrupted by Mr. Milverton and the arrival of a veiled woman. From behind a heavy set of curtains, Holmes can only watch as this woman sends Milverton to his grave, Holmes waiting until the woman has left to indemnify the remainder of Milverton's victims by emptying the contents of his safe into the fire.

The Subtext:

Part of the difficulty in decoding Charles Augustus Milverton is that it is quite difficult to establish a place for the story in terms of chronology. As the story's placement is essential in understanding Holmes and Watson's relationship, we must first turn our attention to carving out a likely date for the story.

Watson tells us that it is *years since the incidents of which I speak took place*. We know that the story was first published in March of 1904, and so already our suspicions rest with a time quite early in Holmes' career.

Not too early, however, as we can see from Holmes and Watson's interaction:

We had been out for one of our evening rambles, Holmes and I, and had returned about six o'clock on a cold, frosty winter's evening.

It is quite obvious here that Holmes and Watson are both living in Baker Street, and that they are quite close. Watson's reference to *one of* their evening rambles is highly suggestive, for it is quite indicative of habit.

Several of Holmes' comments also give us insight into the date. Indeed, Holmes states:

"I've had to do with fifty murderers in my career..."

And again, this is highly suggestive of an earlier date, for it is hard to imagine the cases in Holmes' career providing only fifty murderers.

Finally, in examining Holmes and Watson's relationship, we cannot help but note that it is very reminiscent of their relationship at the start of Holmes' earlier career.

There is Watson's objection to Holmes' plan of burglary, a trait more commonly found in Watson of old. There is the decided sense of uncertainty between the two men, suggesting that their relationship is still quite new. There is the tentative, flirtatious air between them, which suggests that they have not yet incorporated a physical element into their relationship. Finally, there are Watson's heartfelt congratulations upon hearing of Holmes' engagement:

"You would not call me a marrying man, Watson?"

"No, indeed!"

"You'll be interested to hear that I am engaged."

"My dear fellow! I congrat ----"

There are but two times in Watson and Holmes' relationship that Watson might consider congratulating Holmes on his engagement. The first would be during Watson's own marriage, and yet we have demonstrated that Watson is living in Baker Street, and so not, at present, married. The second is during the early years of their acquaintanceship, when they had not yet crossed the line between friends and lovers.

It is therefore your author's opinion that Charles Augustus Milverton took place in the winter of 1884 or 1885, sometime shortly after the events contained within *The Speckled Band*.

Having secured a date, we can once again turn to the story, and the subtext contained within. We return now to the start of our tale, Holmes and Watson having just returned from their ramble through London. Upon the table Holmes discovers the

business card of a Charles Augustus Milverton, and here Watson tells us:

He glanced at it, and then, with an ejaculation of disgust, threw it on the floor.

It becomes quite apparent, right from the start, that Holmes is repulsed by the man he has been forced to do business with. This theme will come up several times throughout the story, and while we will touch on each in turn, it is worth mentioning that Holmes' behaviour towards C.A.M. has led a number of prominent scholars to suggest that Holmes was not unfamiliar with the blackmailer. Indeed, it is our intention to prove that Holmes knew C.A.M. quite well; and not only in his position as intermediary.

Holmes does not merely express his distaste with a thrown business card. Indeed, in answer to Watson's question, Holmes states:

"He is the king of all the blackmailers. Heaven help the man, and still more the woman, whose secret and reputation come into the power of Milverton. With a smiling face and a heart of marble he will squeeze and squeeze until he has drained them dry."

Such venom in Holmes' tone; and here we cannot help but feel as though Holmes' distaste stems from a more personal encounter. Indeed, Holmes' feelings regarding the man are so apparent that Watson tells us:

I had seldom heard my friend speak with such intensity of feeling.

For a man who seldom shows such intensity of feeling, it is indeed quite curious that this outburst should come in response to London's best known blackmailer. Even Moriarty did not excite such rage.

While we cannot be certain what hold this man had (or has) over Holmes, we do know that he is seemingly unfamiliar with Watson. Indeed, Holmes is forced to introduce Watson, stating:

"Dr. Watson is my friend and partner."

There is challenge in Holmes' tone, here, and one cannot help but wonder if Holmes was daring Milverton to make some subtle suggestion. Indeed, it becomes increasingly obvious that Holmes' experience with Milverton likely related to Holmes' inverted nature.

That Holmes and Milverton have a history, we do not doubt, for Watson, during Holmes' interview with Milverton, tells us that Holmes was *grey with anger and mortification*. Indeed, we see that Milverton has upset Holmes greatly, for after Milverton's leaving, Watson tells us:

Holmes sat motionless by the fire, his hands buried deep in his trouser pockets, his chin

sunk upon his breast, his eyes fixed upon the glowing embers. For half an hour he was silent and still.

It is some days later that Holmes announces his intentions to burgle Milverton's home. It is the only way he can hope to secure his client's letters, and it appears quite obvious that Holmes is not willing (or able) to allow Milverton victory. We will return to this in a moment, but first, let us exam Watson's curious reaction to the news:

I had a catching of the breath, and my skin went cold at the words, which were slowly uttered in a tone of concentrated resolution. As a flash of lightning in the night shows up in an instant every detail of a wide landscape, so at one glance I seemed to see every possible result of such an action -- the detection, the capture, the honoured career ending in irreparable failure and disgrace, my friend himself lying at the mercy of the odious Milverton.

It is quite obvious here that, despite the short time of their friendship, Watson is quite attached to Holmes. It was during this time that Watson's obsession slowly grew, until eventually it bloomed into genuine affection. We see this affection in Watson's worry, and know instantly that Watson will not allow Holmes to go alone.

Indeed, in this Watson is quite firm, their conversation, one must agree, quite telling.

"Well, I don't like it; but I suppose it must be," said I. "When do we start?"

"You are not coming."

"Then you are not going," said I.

While again Holmes' reluctance to bring Watson can be seen as a sign of their early acquaintanceship, we must also note Watson's unwillingness to allow Holmes to proceed unaided. Clearly, Holmes already held a place of honour in Watson's heart.

Eventually Holmes does agree, Holmes stating:

"Well, well, my dear fellow, be it so. We have shared the same room for some years, and it would be amusing if we ended by sharing the same cell."

Holmes' statement that they have shared rooms for some years allows us to further pinpoint the date (eliminating, at least, 1882 and 1883), but we are far more amused by Holmes' suggestion that they might come to share a cell. Indeed, it is entirely possible that this was long one of Holmes' fantasies.

Although Watson, apparently, was the kinkier of the two:

"And a mask?"

"I can make a couple out of black silk."

Masks in hand, Holmes and Watson head out to Milverton's home, and it is there

that we begin to see the tentative flirtatiousness that summarized their early relationship. Before, however, they leave, it is important to note that:

Holmes and I put on our dress-clothes, so that we might appear to be two theatre-goers homeward bound.

We cannot begin to imagine why Watson, leaving Baker Street at midnight, should accept this excuse. It is quite obvious that this, to Holmes, was a date. A shame Watson had not yet mastered Holmesian, for if he had, we can well imagine that their relationship would have shifted much earlier.

Indeed, Holmes' wooing upon their arrival at Milverton's estate only intensified, Watson telling us:

He seized my hand in the darkness and led me swiftly past banks of shrubs which brushed against our faces.

And then, later:

Still holding my hand in one of his he opened a door...

Watson, despite not knowing Holmes' true intentions, does eventually get swept away by Holmes' manner. Indeed, Watson tells us:

I touched Holmes on the arm...

Leading Holmes to up the ante, so to speak:

"I don't like it," he whispered, putting his lips to my very ear.

Sadly, there is work at hand, and so Holmes and Watson are forced to put aside their flirting. Watson, it is curious to note, does not quite absorb himself in the job, instead settling back to engage in another favourite pastime; observing Holmes.

With a glow of admiration I watched Holmes unrolling his case of instruments and choosing his tool with the calm, scientific accuracy of a surgeon who performs a delicate operation. I knew that the opening of safes was a particular hobby with him, and I understood the joy which it gave him to be confronted with this green and gold monster, the dragon which held in its maw the reputations of many fair ladies.

We must note, too, Watson's excitement here, for it speaks to the dating of this story. It is quite obvious that this is one of the first, if not the first, of Holmes and Watson's break ins. Again, this is suggestive of an earlier date. The student of subtext will also be interested to note Watson's description, for it is quite obvious that he has been rendered breathless by Holmes' talents with safe-cracking tools. Indeed, Watson goes so far as to cast Holmes into the role of knight and hero, Holmes slaying the gold-green dragon so that he might protect the virtue of many a fair lady. Again, this speaks to an early date,

for Watson's hero-worship is far more prevalent in early Canon.

Watson's observation has not finished, however, and he goes on to describe quite the intimate scene:

Turning up the cuffs of his dress-coat -- he had placed his overcoat on a chair...

Watson's observation, it would appear, has turned to ogling. Holmes' undressing, too, is quite amusing, for we cannot help but note the air of trust and comfort in Holmes' manner. Surely it is no great stretch to suggest that Holmes' languid movements here were symbolic of the comfort and trust which grew in his friendship with Watson.

Sadly, Holmes' comfort and, indeed, Watson's observations, are cut short, the sound of footsteps sending the two men into hiding. They choose to hide behind a set of heavy curtains as Milverton enters the room, Holmes quite frustrated, Watson quite alarmed.

After the passage of what must have seemed like hours, Watson finally dares to part the curtain and glance out into the room. He tells us:

From the pressure of Holmes's shoulder against mine I knew that he was sharing my observations.

And we cannot help but note that, despite the danger of the situation, Holmes is unable to resist pressing himself against Watson's side.

Indeed, being so close to Watson must have been quite overwhelming for Holmes, for a moment later Watson tells us:

I felt Holmes's hand steal into mine and give me a reassuring shake, as if to say that the situation was within his powers and that he was easy in his mind.

A clear indication that Holmes' growing attraction was fast becoming a distraction. Indeed, it is quite likely that after this incidence Holmes began the careful reconstruction of his walls, an act which would see the passage of two years before their relationship once again moved towards intimacy.

Their moment is interrupted by the arrival of a veiled woman, and her visit soon turns deadly, the woman pulling out a revolver and emptying it into Milverton's body. Shocked beyond comprehension, Watson's first instinct is to run to Milverton's aid; an act which Holmes strictly forbids.

I was about to spring out, when I felt Holmes's cold, strong grasp upon my wrist. I understood the whole argument of that firm, restraining grip -- that it was no affair of ours; that justice had overtaken a villain; that we had our own duties and our own objects which were

not to be lost sight of.

Indeed, it is not until the woman leaves, Milverton's body growing cold on the floor, that Holmes releases Watson. While Watson's explanation is quite probable, we must also question whether Holmes had some personal reason for wanting Milverton dead.

It is interesting to note, too, that Holmes' refusal to interfere on Milverton's behalf is followed by his destruction of Milverton's papers.

With perfect coolness Holmes slipped across to the safe, filled his two arms with bundles of letters, and poured them all into the fire. Again and again he did it, until the safe was empty.

Was there something inside beyond the letters of his client? Something which Holmes dreaded coming to light?

We have alluded at length to the possibility that Holmes was being (or had been) blackmailed by Milverton, and we will delve now into this theory more completely. We have established that Holmes seems to know Milverton from outside of this case. It would appear, too, based on Milverton's familiarity with Holmes, that Milverton has had dealings with Holmes as well. We have established Holmes' intense distaste for Milverton, suggesting a personal affront. We have demonstrated Holmes' desperation at obtaining the documents and letters in Milverton's care. When examined as a series of events, several theories come to mind, which suggest that Holmes has, at some point in his past, had dealings with Milverton outside of Holmes' professional career.

We will first suggest that, at some point in the past, Holmes himself was a victim of Milverton's blackmailing. In fact, it is quite possible that this stemmed from Holmes' relationship with Victor Trevor (GLOR). Alternatively, it could have arisen from something written by Holmes which pertained, not to an individual, but to his inverted nature.

We must also consider the possibility that Holmes was presently being blackmailed. If this is the case, then we can easily understand Holmes' desperation to obtain access to Milverton's safe. Indeed, as Watson does not meet Holmes' client, it is entirely possible that she was, in fact, a fabrication.

Other scholars have suggested that it was not Holmes, but rather, someone close to him in the role of Milverton's victim. Indeed, there is even the possibility, however slim, that it was Watson who fell under Milverton's control. It should be noted that this theory strengthens only when we place the case at a later date. Had this case taken place during the time of Watson's marriage (or engagement) and had Milverton proof

of Watson's illustrious affair with Holmes, we have no doubt that he would have used this information to destroy both men.

Of all the theories presented, however, it is the first (that Holmes' relationship with Milverton stemmed from a past meeting) which presents the most plausibility. It is your author's opinion, then, that Holmes' first meeting with Milverton came during his relationship with Victor Trevor. As Trevor came from a well respected family, one can easily imagine that it was Trevor who fell victim to Milverton's blackmailing. Indeed, this is likely what ended Holmes' relationship with Trevor, and caused Holmes to leave University before the completion of his studies. Holmes' lingering resentment towards Milverton, and his desire to destroy Milverton's papers (on the off chance that Milverton still held incriminating documents against Holmes) fit quite nicely within this theory.

Indeed, so too does Holmes' reluctance to allow Watson to accompany him, for at this point in their relationship, we cannot doubt that Holmes would have despaired at the prospect of Watson discovering Holmes' true nature. This becomes even more apparent if we date this story in the winter of 1884/1885, for it was not until 1887/1888 that Holmes first told Watson the story of young Victor Trevor (GLOR).

The Six Napoleons

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Six Napoleons* in June of 1900. Watson does reference the month of June, but does not give us a firm year. As Watson's narrative is very suggestive of a later date (as, indeed, is Holmes and Watson's relationship) we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in May of 1904.

Synopsis:

Inspector Lestrade seeks Holmes' aid in solving a most unusual, if not entirely crucial, case. It appears as though London has a madman on the loose, Scotland Yard unable to put together a motive for why any man should burgle several homes for the sole purpose of destroying busts of the former French dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte. While initially uninterested in the case, Holmes does agree to look into it, automatically dismissing Watson's claim of an 'idée fixe' in favour of a more singular explanation. Holmes' instinct soon proves correct, and after tracking down the sixth Napoleon bust, he is able to reveal what lies hidden within.

The Subtext:

The case begins with the arrival of Inspector Lestrade. Lestrade is investigating several burglaries whose sole motive appears to be a madman's need to destroy busts of Napoleon Bonaparte. Watson, upon hearing of these singular incidences, suggests that the man may be a monomaniac, and that his desire to destroy these busts stems from what Watson refers to as an 'idée fixe'. Holmes, naturally, disagrees, stating:

"That won't do, my dear Watson," said Holmes, shaking his head.

We must point out Holmes' use of *my dear* here, for it is quite amusing that Holmes should so slip and use this term of endearment with Lestrade in the room. One can well imagine that the habit was so ingrained that Holmes uttered the words by instinct alone.

Holmes has not yet formed his own theory, but the next morning he is more than eager to head out and begin his investigation. Watson tells us:

I was still dressing in my bedroom next morning when there was a tap at the door and

Holmes entered, a telegram in his hand.

Note that Holmes does not wait for Watson to reply to his knock, instead walking in while Watson is still half dressed. Given the propriety of Victorians (even this late in the era) we should not expect to see such a thing; not without explanation, anyway. Fortunately, the explanation is quite simple: Watson's bedroom is also Holmes' bedroom, and so it is quite natural that Holmes should come and go as he pleases, unconcerned with Watson's state of dress.

We see further proof for this as evening roles around, Watson telling us:

Holmes spent the evening in rummaging among the files of the old daily papers with which one of our lumber-rooms was packed.

Note that Watson tells us that *one of* their lumber-rooms had been turned into storage. As we cannot imagine Baker Street requiring more than one lumber-room, we must therefore deduce that Holmes' old bedroom has been turned into a storage room.

From this point, the case itself comes quickly to a close. Holmes, having persuaded Lestrade to follow him out to Chiswick, is now prepared to apprehend the man responsible for destroying Napoleon's busts. Arriving at the home of one of the men known to own a Napoleon bust (from a set of six), Holmes need not wait long before the arrival of his man. Indeed, Watson soon tells us:

With the bound of a tiger Holmes was on his back.

Here, we cannot help but note Watson's language. Indeed, we have no doubt that Holmes is capable of bounding like a tiger, and yet, that this is the phrase which comes to Watson's mind is quite suggestive. We can only imagine what led to the inspiration for this particular phrase.

To Lestrade, it appears as though the case has been solved, and yet Holmes still has one trick up his sleeve. This comes to a head in Baker Street, Lestrade arriving to share his notes on the case. We soon see, however, that Holmes is less than interested in Lestrade's narrative, Watson telling us:

...but I, who knew him so well, could clearly see that his thoughts were elsewhere...

We have no doubt that to anyone else Holmes' attention must have seemed quite genuine. Indeed, Lestrade does not once pause in his explanation, suggesting that he took no notice. We must therefore suggest that the minute change in Holmes which gave him away was something only Watson, the only person to be intimately acquainted with Holmes, could perceive.

Holmes' mood lasts but a moment, his attention shifting noticeably with the ringing of the bell. It is then that we are introduced to the final key in this most singular problem. Indeed, it is the arrival of Mr. Sandeford, the owner of the sixth, and only remaining Napoleon bust, that sets Holmes up for his final achievement.

Much to both Watson and Lestrade's surprise, Holmes purchases the bust from Mr. Sandeford, and, as soon as Mr. Sandeford has left, sets about smashing the bust with a riding crop.

From within the shattered remains, Holmes pulls out a round, dark object, which turns out to be none of then the famous, and thought to be lost, black pearl of the Borgias. This move astounds both Lestrade and Watson; so much so that Watson tells us:

Lestrade and I sat silent for a moment, and then, with a spontaneous impulse, we both broke at clapping, as at the well-wrought crisis of a play.

While certainly amusing, it is Holmes' reaction to this ovation that warrants comment.

A flush of color sprang to Holmes's pale cheeks, and he bowed to us like the master dramatist who receives the homage of his audience. It was at such moments that for an instant he ceased to be a reasoning machine, and betrayed his human love for admiration and applause. The same singularly proud and reserved nature which turned away with disdain from popular notoriety was capable of being moved to its depths by spontaneous wonder and praise from a friend.

With the passing of years, we have seen more and more of Holmes' heart. It appears here, too, in vivid detail, and yet it is still quite remarkable to note that Holmes should be so moved by the praise of a friend. Watson's description of Holmes here, too, is quite telling, for he distinctly refers to Holmes' human side; a side which, until now, only Watson had been privy to. We have been shown Holmes the man, and we cannot help but feel grateful, and privileged, that Watson should allow his public such a glimpse; such a gift.

The story does not, however, end here, for, after sketching out the chain of events which led Holmes to his conclusion, Lestrade pays our detective a great compliment, stating:

"We're not jealous of you at Scotland Yard. No, sir, we are very proud of you, and if you come down tomorrow, there's not a man, from the oldest inspector to the youngest constable, who wouldn't be glad to shake you by the hand."

To which Holmes replies:

"Thank you!" said Holmes. "Thank you!" and as he turned away, it seemed to me that he was more nearly moved by the softer human emotions than I had ever seen him.

One can well imagine the pride in Watson's heart as he wrote these words, for, although he knew the true depths of Holmes' heart, it must have been of great comfort to him to finally be permitted to share this aspect of Holmes' personality with the public. That Holmes was capable of the *softer human emotions* is no longer in doubt, and we cannot help but feel that this is largely Watson's doing. Truly, Holmes' relationship with Watson has opened his heart to the world.

The Problem of Thor Bridge

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Problem of Thor Bridge* in October of 1900. Watson tells us that it is October, but does not mention a year. The story, however, contains several elements which suggest a later date. Indeed, your author is tempted to date this story in the early years of Holmes' retirement. We shall return to this theory throughout our analysis, noting here only Watson's reference to Holmes' famous career, as well as Holmes' reference to Watson's chronicles as evidence for a later date. The story was first published in February of 1922.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes is commissioned by a Mr. Neil Gibson to look into the death of his wife, and to then prove his governess innocent of her murder. Holmes agrees, and although he and Gibson butt heads on several occasions, Holmes is quickly able to cast aside the evidence against Miss Dunbar and form his own hypothesis. A chip in Thor Bridge is what leads Holmes to his conclusion, and with the aid of Watson's revolver he is soon able to demonstrate that Mrs. Gibson's murder was, in fact, a suicide.

The Subtext:

Before turning our examination to the subtext contained within the story, we must first note that Watson is writing this story in 1922 (possibly late 1921). Within the first few paragraphs, he spends some time discussing Holmes' past cases before deciding to document the events contained within *The Problem of Thor Bridge*. It is during this time that Watson tells us:

There remain a considerable residue of cases of greater or less interest which I might have edited before had I not feared to give the public a surfeit which might react upon the reputation of the man whom above all others I revere.

Here we can assume two things. First, that Holmes is still very much alive in 1922, for Watson refers to Holmes' reputation in the present tense. Second, we can conclude that it is Holmes, above all others, that holds Watson's admiration; indeed, poor Mary Morstan does not seem to appear on Watson's list. This is quite remarkable, not to mention telling, for we can no longer doubt that Watson remained loyal to Holmes

throughout their retired years. A four decade commitment and we are not at all surprised that their relationship has stood the test of time.

We mentioned above the possibility that this story took place some years after Baring-Gould's date. In our dating of the story, we suggest that it is possible that Holmes was in the early years of his retirement during this case. While there are certainly problems with this suggestion, allow us to examine several comments which lead us to believe that Holmes and Watson are no longer in Baker Street, and, indeed, have retired together.

It was a wild morning in October, and I observed as I was dressing how the last remaining leaves were being whirled from the solitary plane tree which graces the yard behind our house.

While other scholars have examined the probability that such a tree grew behind 221B Baker Street (finding evidence which suggests an improbability) here we wish only to point out Watson's statement of a yard behind *our house*. Watson has referred to Baker Street as their apartments, and their rooms, but never their house. Therefore, either they had purchased the home from Mrs. Hudson (although again, this theory is improbable), or they had moved. Where else, then, but to Sussex, where Holmes and Watson rented a small villa. We have no doubt that, during the early years of Holmes' supposed retirement, Holmes may have taken on the occasional case. It would have taken him years to set up a bee colony, after all.

Further proof can be found to substantiate this theory as Holmes tells Watson:

"There is little to share, but we may discuss it when you have consumed the two hard-boiled eggs with which our new cook has favoured us."

Curious, is it not, that in all their years in Baker Street Mrs. Hudson saw to the cooking. One wonders, then, why Holmes should feel the need to mention a new cook. Some time later, Holmes will also mention Billy the page; noteworthy, for we begin to see the building of a household. It is your author's opinion, then, that Holmes and Watson moved, together, to Sussex, where they established a household as befitted their needs. That this household should be scaled down to *an old housekeeper* (and even this is suggestive, for while scholars have speculated that this woman is, in fact, Mrs. Hudson, we must also suggest that the title of old refers to her having survived Holmes' round of lay-offs) with Holmes and Watson's true retirement is not surprising.

Having finished their breakfast, Holmes is now in a position to share what little he knows of the case. Their client arrives later that morning, and Holmes' piercing ques-

tions are quick to anger Mr. Gibson. Indeed, at one point Mr. Gibson makes as if to strike Holmes. Here, Watson tells us:

I sprang to my feet, for the expression upon the millionaire's face was fiendish in its intensity, and he had raised his great knotted fist.

We cannot help but note Watson's protectiveness here. Indeed, we have no doubt that Watson would throw himself between the millionaire's rage and Holmes if he thought it might save Holmes some injury.

This outburst is followed by Gibson's leaving, but Holmes is not alarmed, knowing that Gibson cares too much for Miss Dunbar to leave her case in the hands of mere defence lawyers. In fact, immediately following Gibson's leave-taking, Watson tells us:

Our visitor made a noisy exit, but Holmes smoked in imperturbable silence with dreamy eyes fixed upon the ceiling.

One cannot quite fathom the reason that Holmes' expression should shift to dreamy, and so we must deduce that Holmes merely glanced to the ceiling, and that Watson's use of the word *dreamy* was meant to describe Holmes' eyes, rather than his expression. Clearly, Watson, despite the passage of so many long years, is still quite smitten.

Only a few moments pass before Gibson's return, and Holmes is soon able to convince him that the best course of action is to lay out the entire truth. Gibson does exactly, telling Holmes that he pressed advances on Miss Dunbar, but that she did not reciprocate his feelings. Holmes is quite off-put by Gibson's treatment of Dunbar, and Watson tells us:

Holmes could look very formidable when he was moved.

Scorn is the emotion behind Holmes' formidability, and we cannot help but remark that this largely stemmed from Gibson's treatment of his wife, and his governess. It becomes quite apparent, then, that Holmes is quite the chivalrous gentleman. One wonders if Watson appreciated this particular trait.

Shortly after Gibson's narrative, Holmes does agree to take on the case, and he and Watson head down to Thor Place to begin their investigation. Holmes starts at the scene of the murder, and there Watson tells us:

He seated himself upon the stone ledge of the bridge, and I could see his quick gray eyes darting their questioning glances in every direction.

Again we are witness to Watson's singular obsession with Holmes' eyes. In fact, it becomes tempting to date this story at an earlier date, despite all evidence pointing to the contrary. Perhaps Watson had only recently obtained a set of eye glasses. He was,

after all, quickly pushing past middle-age.

Having examined the bridge, their investigation comes to a stand still, Holmes unable to proceed until he has had a chance to interview Miss Dunbar. Watson tells us:

We were compelled to spend the night at Winchester...

While Winchester is quite far from London, it is even more difficult to reach from Sussex. One wonders if this is the true reason Holmes and Watson chose not to take the train home, instead passing the evening in a local inn. Then again, they could very well have used the opportunity to engage in a romantic evening away from home.

The next morning, Holmes and Watson are able to interview Miss Dunbar, and it is shortly after her testimony that Watson tells us:

His pale, eager face had suddenly assumed that tense, far-away expression which I had learned to associate with the supreme manifestations of his genius.

We see here that, again, despite the passage of many a long year, Watson is still quite taken with his Holmes. Watson's continued infatuation with Holmes aside, the above is of interest, not in itself, but in context with Holmes' next remarks. Upon sitting lost in thought for some times, Watson tells us:

Suddenly he sprang from his chair, vibrating with nervous energy and the pressing need for action.

Holmes then shouts:

"Come, Watson, come!"

And we can only imagine that Holmes was in need of a momentary distraction. He had not yet gathered the threads of his theory together, and what better way to clarify his mind than to drag Watson back to their hotel and work off some of his nervous energy.

Watson would, of course, have us believe that they headed straight to Thor Place. Sadly, we must accept this turn of events, for Watson's next action is to tell us:

It was not a long journey from Winchester to Thor Place, but it was long to me in my impatience, while for Holmes it was evident that it seemed endless; for, in his nervous restlessness he could not sit still, but paced the carriage or drummed with his long, sensitive fingers upon the cushions beside him.

Here one simply must question: How was it that Watson knew Holmes' fingers were sensitive? An unusual statement, to be sure. Especially between two friends. Two lovers, on the other hand... We must agree, then, that the above statement is quite sensual, especially when put into context with Holmes' next actions.

Suddenly, however, as we neared our destination he seated himself opposite to me — we had a first-class carriage to ourselves — and laying a hand upon each of my knees he looked into my eyes with the peculiarly mischievous gaze which was characteristic of his more imp-like moods.

Your author does not feel as though the above passage requires an explanation. In fact, I believe we shall simply take a moment so that we might catch our breath.

Remarkable as it may seem, the subtext does not end there, for soon Holmes turns to questioning Watson regarding his “revolver”. Their conversation, one must agree, is quite... charged.

“Watson,” said he, “I have some recollection that you go armed upon these excursions of ours.”

It was as well for him that I did so, for he took little care for his own safety when his mind was once absorbed by a problem so that more than once my revolver had been a good friend in need. I reminded him of the fact.

“Yes, yes, I am a little absent-minded in such matters. But have you your revolver on you?”

I produced it from my hip-pocket, a short, handy, but very serviceable little weapon. He undid the catch, shook out the cartridges, and examined it with care.

“It’s heavy — remarkably heavy,” said he.

“Yes, it is a solid bit of work.”

He mused over it for a minute.

“Do you know, Watson,” said he, “I believe your revolver is going to have a very intimate connection with the mystery which we are investigating.”

Apparently Holmes and Watson have taken to having sex on the train now. A bit of a risk, but as they did have a first class carriage to themselves, we have no doubt that their activities went unnoticed. We need not, of course, mention the euphemism in the above conversation, for it should be quite obvious.

Some time later (and we can well imagine that Holmes and Watson were forced to scramble to make themselves decent as their train arrived at Thor Place) Holmes does, in fact, find a use for Watson’s revolver (and it is nice to note that their mid-case distraction did indeed result in a flash of insight for Holmes). Some doubt, however, does linger, Holmes telling Watson:

“Yes,” he said in answer to my remark, “you have seen me miss my mark before, Watson. I have an instinct for such things, and yet it has sometimes played me false. It seemed a cer-

tainty when first it flashed across my mind in the cell at Winchester, but one drawback of an active mind is that one can always conceive alternative explanations which would make our scent a false one. And yet — and yet — Well, Watson, we can but try.”

A testament, to their long years of friendship, and the extreme intimacy which existed between them, that Holmes should confess his doubts for Watson to hear.

It takes but one demonstration for Holmes to prove his theory, his doubts unfounded, and soon Holmes announces:

“We’ll stay at the inn to-night,” he continued as he rose and faced the astonished sergeant.

Despite the conclusion of the case, Holmes is not willing to make the long trek home; too eager is he to return to their rooms where they might finish what they started in the train. This becomes quite apparent later, Watson telling us:

Late that evening, as we sat together smoking our pipes in the village inn...

What Watson meant to say, we are sure, was:

Late that evening, as we sat together smoking our after-sex pipes in the village inn...

One wonders if Holmes chose his standard shag tobacco for these occasions, or if he had a special blend.

The Priory School

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Priory School* in May of 1901. Watson confirms the month, but does not give a year. As the story references past events occurring in 1900, we must conclude that this case took place after 1900. As the story was first published in January of 1904, we must therefore place the case between 1900 and 1904. Baring-Gould argues for an earlier date due to the Duke's marriage, which occurred in 1888. At the time of the story, he has a ten year-old son and, as he is now separated from his wife, it is reasonable to assume that Lord Saltire was born shortly after the Duke's marriage.

Synopsis:

In what Watson describes as a dramatic entrance upon their small stage in Baker Street, Holmes is visited by a Dr. Thorneycroft Huxtable, the founder and principal of a preparatory school in Northern England. Despite having fainted on Holmes and Watson's bearskin rug, Watson is quickly able to revive Dr. Huxtable so that he might tell his tale. One of Dr. Huxtable's students (Lord Saltire, the son of the Duke of Holderness) has disappeared from the school, and Huxtable, eager to avoid scandal and ruin, is quite anxious for the boy's safe return. Holmes immediately takes up the case, but not all is as it seems, the key to the case several sets of cattle tracks where no cattle should have been. The final solution is pure genius, and will make Holmes a very rich man.

The Subtext:

And yet his first action, when the door had closed behind him, was to stagger against the table, whence he slipped down upon the floor, and there was that majestic figure prostrate and insensible upon our bearskin hearthrug.

The story begins in Baker Street with the arrival of Dr. Huxtable, and we see in the above statement that he is quite out of his wits. While fascinating in terms of the case, above we are far more interested to note that Holmes and Watson have apparently taken to buying accessories for their home. This is quite amusing, for it is exceedingly domestic. One can almost picture Watson dragging Holmes into various shops so that

they might find the perfect rug for their hearth.

Returning, however, to the story at hand, a dose of brandy soon revives Dr. Huxtable, and as soon as he is able, he tells Holmes of Lord Saltire's disappearance, begging Holmes to come with him down to the school. Holmes agrees, and soon he and Watson are on their way to Mackleton, and the priory school where Lord Saltire was a student.

Upon their arrival, Holmes' first order of business is to interview the boy's father. The Duke of Holderness is not at all pleased to find that Dr. Huxtable has involved the great Sherlock Holmes, but he does permit Holmes to continue with his investigation. He will not, however, satisfy Holmes' full curiosity, and it is during Holmes' interview with the Duke that Watson tells us:

I could see that there were other questions which Holmes would have wished to put, but the nobleman's abrupt manner showed that the interview was at an end.

Here we cannot help but note how well Watson knows his Holmes; or, indeed, how keen Watson's observation is where Holmes is concerned. Indeed, everything we, as a reader, have learned of Holmes, we have learned from Watson. It is fairly safe to assume, then, that Watson knows Holmes even better than he knows himself.

Shortly after their interview with the Duke, Holmes and Watson return to the rooms the school has set aside for them. There, Watson tells us:

Sherlock Holmes left the house alone, and only returned after eleven. He had obtained a large ordnance map of the neighbourhood, and this he brought into my room, where he laid it out on the bed, and, having balanced the lamp in the middle of it, he began to smoke over it, and occasionally to point out objects of interest with the reeking amber of his pipe.

While we have no doubt that Holmes and Watson were forced to sleep in separate rooms, it is quite amusing to note that Holmes still finds excuses to spend all of his time in Watson's room. Indeed, in reading the above statement it is quite easy to picture Holmes and Watson sitting hip to hip on Watson's bed, staring at the map while trying to suppress the inevitable well of desire which surged between them whenever they were presented with a locked room and functional bed.

Indeed, the temptation appeared to be too great for Holmes, for the next morning Watson tells us:

The day was just breaking when I woke to find the long, thin form of Holmes by my bedside.

That Holmes was unable to pass the night without his Watson is quite endearing.

In truth Holmes has been up for some time, returning just in time for Watson to wake; and it is quite remarkable that Holmes knows Watson's habits well enough to be present at the moment Watson awakes. Indeed, this becomes quite evident when we note Holmes' next comment:

"Now, Watson, there is cocoa ready in the next room."

Here we cannot help but note how fortunate Watson truly was, to have a boyfriend willing to wake up early just to make him cocoa.

Watson appears to know this, quite well, for instead of answering Holmes, he merely tells us:

His eyes shone, and his cheek was flushed with the exhilaration of the master workman who sees his work lie ready before him. A very different Holmes, this active, alert man, from the introspective and pallid dreamer of Baker Street. I felt, as I looked upon that supple figure, alive with nervous energy, that it was indeed a strenuous day that awaited us.

The above sentence is practically pornographic in nature. Indeed, Watson speaks of Holmes' *supple figure, alive with nervous energy* and then makes reference to a *strenuous day* before them. Watson is not at all subtle in describing Holmes' arousal, either, for he clearly mentions Holmes' shining eyes and flushed cheeks. Clearly, the country air does Holmes a wonder of good. One wonders, then, if it was Watson's suggestion that they retire in Sussex; indeed, one can well imagine that Watson quite liked this side of Holmes.

Some time later, Holmes and Watson finally make it out of Watson's small bedroom, and it is upon the morass that they begin their investigation. They soon pick up the bicycle tracks belonging to the German instructor who disappeared alongside the boy. He has long been a suspect, but the discovery of Heidegger's body instantly dismisses the theory.

Uncertain what to do with the body, Watson offers to take a note back to the school, but Holmes will hear nothing of the idea, stating:

"But I need your company and assistance."

Note that Holmes' first thought is for Watson's company. Clearly, Holmes would be quite lonely without his Watson, and clearly he has reached a point in his relationship with Watson where he is not afraid to admit this.

Their dilemma is solved with the spotting of a local shepherd, and Holmes dispatches the peasant with a note before he and Watson continue on their way. They soon find themselves in a small town just outside of the Duke's estate, and there, after meeting

the landlord of the local inn, Holmes' hackles are raised and he soon finds himself working towards the case's conclusion.

Several questions remain, however, but before they can be answered Holmes must first satisfy a curiosity. This will require Watson's aid, and Holmes' request, one must admit, is quite amusing.

"If you bend your back and support yourself upon the wall, I think that I can manage."

Oh. My.

Having now obtained all the information that Holmes requires, he and Watson return to the priory school. The next morning, they set out for Holderness Hall to see the Duke. There, Holmes first seeks the Duke's assurances regarding the promised reward of six-thousand pounds. Upon hearing the Duke's confirmation, Watson tells us:

My friend rubbed his thin hands together with an appearance of avidity which was a surprise to me, who knew his frugal tastes.

And here we must suggest that Holmes, who has never once shown a particular interest in wealth, was now in need of funds. Could it be that Holmes, having heard Watson's request that they move to the country, wished to purchase Watson a country villa? Curious, is it not, that it is in Holmes' later years that he expresses an interest in nature.

Prior to Holmes' return, we cannot imagine him retiring outside of the city of London, nor can we picture him keeping bees, and yet that is exactly what he does. Is it unreasonable, then, to suggest that Holmes' move to Sussex was Watson's idea, and that Holmes agreed simply because he knew it would make Watson happy? And if this is the case, is it also unreasonable to suggest that, having committed to the idea of retirement, Holmes would wish to raise enough money to buy Watson a place that they might call home? Admittedly, this theory is suggestive of a later date for this case, and yet, why else should Holmes request six thousand pounds when his rates were on a fixed scale?

Events come together quickly as Holmes accuses the Duke of knowing exactly where his son is. Part of the story comes out, and it is upon the Duke's statement that the German master's murderer has escaped that Watson tells us:

Sherlock Holmes smiled demurely.

An interesting description, we must agree, for the image of a blushing, shy Holmes is not one we would expect to see. Indeed, one wonders if Watson is referring to

Holmes in this moment, or if his words came from an earlier memory; perhaps that of Holmes' reaction to their first kiss.

As it turns out, Holmes has already arranged for the man's arrest, and so the Duke is now free to finish his tale. The Duke tells Holmes that it was his eldest son, James (who had been masquerading as the Duke's secretary) that arranged, with the aid of a known criminal (Hayes), the abduction of the Duke's rightful heir. The Duke tells us:

"James came into contact with this fellow Hayes, because the man was a tenant of mine, and James acted as agent. The fellow was a rascal from the beginning, but, in some extraordinary way, James became intimate with him. He had always a taste for low company."

This is one of the many side plots found within Canon which depicts a homosexual liaison or relationship between two supporting characters. Given the prevalence of this theme, it is safe to assume that Watson's frankness here existed because he was unable to exhibit frankness elsewhere.

Indeed, James and Hayes relationship appears to be quite serious, for James, despite now knowing that Hayes has committed murder, goes out of his way to arrange for Hayes safe passage. Indeed, he puts Hayes safety above even his own, risking his father's wrath, public scandal, and imprisonment until Hayes has safely fled the area.

As the case ends, it is interesting to note that Holmes agrees to hush up the matter. While we have seen Holmes do this in the past, it is quite interesting to note Holmes' motives here. Indeed, they appear to be entirely financial in nature. As this seems to stand in direct contrast to Holmes' nature, one must examine the potential for an alternate motive.

During his narrative, the Duke tells Holmes:

"I loved with such a love as comes only once in a lifetime."

One wonders, then, if Holmes felt some sense of connection with the Duke, for he too knew what it was like to love with such a love as only comes once in a lifetime. Could it have been that Holmes felt some sense of kinship with the Duke, and so began to understand the Duke's motives? We cannot doubt that Holmes would do anything for Watson, including committing several felonies, and so it is not unreasonable to suggest that Holmes understood, only too well, the Duke's motives.

Mostly, however, we must concur that Holmes' motives were driven by the Duke's six-thousand pound cheque. Clearly, Holmes was thinking entirely of his and Watson's impending retirement.

Shoscombe Old Place

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place* in May of 1902. Watson does not give us a year, but he does confirm the month. The story does, however, seem to indicate a later date, and so we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's placement of Shoscombe Old Place. The story was first published in March of 1927.

Synopsis:

Mr. John Mason, the head trainer at Shoscombe Old Place, seeks Holmes' advice regarding a problem with his master. It seems Sir Robert Norberton has gone mad; at least, so thinks Mr. Mason, for why else should Sir Robert quarrel with his sister, and then give away her prized spaniel? Why, too, should Sir Robert act himself so strangely, and who is the man he meets at the old crypts? And what does all of this have to do with the fragments of human bone found in the old furnace? Mason suspects the approaching Derby has finally overwhelmed Sir Robert's mind, but Holmes has a slightly different opinion. A quick trip to Shoscombe, the use of an inn's dog, and Holmes is soon able to prove that Sir Robert's sister is not who she seems.

The Subtext:

Sherlock Holmes had been bending for a long time over a low-power microscope. Now he straightened himself up and looked round at me in triumph.

The *Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place* begins in Baker Street, Holmes and Watson ensconced in domestic bliss, with Holmes engaged in another of his experiments and Watson admiring Holmes' backside from afar. Here, we cannot help but note Holmes' desire to share his triumph with Watson, for it is clear that Holmes has been aware of Watson's eyes for some time. There is a deep sense of familiarity here, Holmes wishing to share the outcome of his research with Watson, while at the same time, wanting, in some measure, to show off his prowess.

Indeed, Holmes goes so far as to invite Watson to look for himself, Holmes slipping into the role of teacher as he walks Watson through the experiment. This leads Holmes to bring up his most recent case, and we begin, almost immediately, to see Holmes' need to involve Watson in the affair.

“By the way, Watson, you know something of racing?”

“I ought to. I pay for it with about half my wound pension.”

“Then I’ll make you my ‘Handy Guide to the Turf.’ What about Sir Robert Norberton? Does the name recall anything?”

While we see in the above passage Holmes’ dependency on Watson (and, indeed, proof that Holmes’ practice has become a partnership in earnest) here we must draw the reader’s attention to the comment that Watson pays for horse racing with half his wound pension. The reader will undoubtedly recall that Watson sold his practice upon Holmes’ return, and that Holmes has not yet permitted Watson to begin publishing their cases. If this is the case, then we must assume that Watson’s only income is his war wound pension.

Curious, is it not, that Watson can afford to spend half of this on gambling. It becomes quite obvious, then, that Holmes and Watson’s funds are no longer as separate as they were when Watson first moved into Baker Street. Indeed, it is highly likely that Holmes has opened a joint account, into which he deposits all of the income from their practice. That Holmes should allow Watson his wound pension for spending money is quite likely the result of a very specific arrangement. While this may not seem of interest to the student of subtext, it is important to note that the sharing of finances is indeed a serious commitment.

Watson proves quite well versed in the sport of racing, but more so, is able to give Holmes ample information on Sir Robert and Shoscombe Old Place. In fact, Holmes is so thrilled by Watson’s memory that he is driven to shout:

“Capital, Watson!”

Truly, one can almost picture the gleam of excitement in Holmes’ eyes.

This is indeed Watson’s case to shine, for by the time Holmes’ client, the head trainer at Shoscombe Old Place, Mr. Mason, arrives, Watson has already given Holmes a thorough description of Sir Robert, his relations, and the property in question. Indeed, so thorough is Watson’s explanation that Holmes is left only wanting in the event which has caused Mr. Mason to seek his aid.

Fortunately, Mr. Mason is not long in coming, and soon Holmes finds himself agreeing to come down to Shoscombe so that he can look into Sir Robert’s curious affairs and determine exactly what it is that has caused his recent erratic behaviour. As Holmes bids Mr. Mason good day, he pauses momentarily to inquire into the location of a good inn, asking, much to Mr. Mason’s surprise, if there is good fishing in the area.

By way of explanation, Holmes states:

“Watson and I are famous fishermen — are we not, Watson?”

Indeed, we cannot help but find it quite endearing that Holmes and Watson share, not only their personal and professional lives, but also their hobbies.

Holmes and Watson do not waste time in making their way to Shoscombe; indeed, they leave that night, Watson telling us:

Thus it was that on a bright May evening Holmes and I found ourselves alone in a first-class carriage and bound for the little “halt-on-demand” station of Shoscombe.

The above statement is quite curious, in that it poses a rather interesting question. Why is it that Holmes and Watson, when traveling by train, prefer to travel alone in a first class carriage? The answer is, of course, quite simple. Only a first class carriage could offer the privacy Holmes and Watson needed, for it has become quite apparent that sex on a train is one of Holmes’ many kinks. One wonders if Holmes found the swaying particularly challenging, and so sought to rise to the occasion.

Their arrival in Shoscombe, and the local inn, sparks little comment, and so, after engaging the landlord in a brief conversation regarding Sir Robert, the state of fishing in the area, and his spaniel in the front room, Holmes and Watson retire to bed. The next morning, Watson tells us:

About eleven o’clock we started for a walk, and he obtained leave to take the black spaniel with us.

We must first note that eleven o’clock occurs shortly after Holmes and Watson’s waking. We must then note that Watson had told us it was evening when they set out to Shoscombe. If this is true, then it becomes quite obvious that Holmes and Watson retired early, and slept in late. We can only speculate on the reasons for this, and yet, by this point they should seem quite obvious.

We turn now to examining Holmes’ desire to take *the black spaniel with us*. This is not, of course, the first dog to appear in Canon (indeed, Holmes seems quite taken with dogs in general), but it is the first dog Holmes has used for a purpose other than tracking a criminal. While not of particular interest to the student of subtext, Holmes’ seeming love for dogs is quite fascinating, for it allows us to speculate upon a singular question. Why is it that Holmes does not himself own a dog?

Here we suggest that Baker Street was no place for an animal (indeed, this is quite apparent, given that poor Watson had to give up his bull pup), and that Holmes’ demanding career made him an unsuitable dog owner. Is it not entirely possible, then,

that upon retiring, Holmes, now in a small country villa, and with ample time on his hands, might seek to adopt a dog? While we are certainly lacking proof, the image of Holmes and Watson taking their dog for a nightly walk is simply too delightful to pass up.

Returning to Holmes and Watson's borrowed dog, the black spaniel proves more than just a loyal walking companion, and Holmes is soon able to prove that Sir Robert's sister, the Lady Beatrice, is not who she seems. Indeed, she is not a she at all; the Lady having obviously been replaced by a poor impersonator. It is at this point that Watson tells us:

My companion seemed to have no further plans for the day, and we did actually use our fishing tackle in the millstream with the result that we had a dish of trout for our supper.

It appears as though Holmes has taken now to blending his work with his play. One wonders if he agreed to take the case simply because he wished to holiday with his Watson in the Berkshire country air.

The next morning, however, Holmes is back on the case, this time heading out to investigate the old crypt Mr. Mason first mentioned. It is there that Holmes and Watson are able to put the final pieces of the puzzle together; Holmes and Watson discovering the body of Sir Robert's sister, and the disappearance of several archaic bones to account for the bone fragments found in the furnace.

Before they can move forward, however, Holmes and Watson are accosted by Sir Roberts, who has come to the crypt to pay his respects to his sister. Sir Roberts blanches upon hearing Holmes' name, and realizing that a full explanation will be to his advantage, he invites Holmes and Watson into the house.

After hearing Sir Robert's story, Holmes admits that Sir Robert has committed no real crime, but insists that he must turn the matter over to the police. It is with Holmes' closing remarks that he turns to Watson to state:

"It is nearly midnight, Watson, and I think we may make our way back to our humble abode."

While we would not expect Holmes to return to Baker Street at such a late hour (if, indeed, there was even a scheduled train), we can well imagine Holmes' eagerness to return to their room at the inn. Having solved yet another case, we cannot doubt that Holmes should wish a moment alone with Watson, so that they might celebrate.

The Three Garridebs

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs* in June of 1902. As this is the exact date that Watson gives (and indeed, 3GAR is one of the few stories dated consistently) we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in October of 1924.

Synopsis:

Holmes, having received a curious letter from a Nathan Garrideb, soon learns that the name Garrideb is worth a considerable bit of money. In his letter, Nathan Garrideb explains that he has been contacted by an American named John Garrideb, and that if they can find a third male Garrideb to stand alongside them, they stand to inherit five million dollars a piece. Holmes has just remarked on the singularity of the case when he is visited by the John Garrideb mentioned in Nathan's letter. John Garrideb is not at all pleased that Nathan Garrideb has involved a detective, and yet short of giving himself away, there is nothing he can do save accept Holmes' aid. A curious case, and yet Holmes is soon able to uncover John Garrideb's true identity, his scheme to get Nathan Garrideb out of his home a stroke of genius. Sadly, the conclusion of the case will cost one man his reason, another man a blood-letting, and yet another man the penalties of the law.

The Subtext:

In order to fully comprehend the staggering implications of this story, we must first examine its placement within the chronology. As we have accepted Watson's date of June, 1902, we need only work backwards in order to see the true enormity of the events contained without *The Three Garridebs*.

Recall that Holmes and Watson first met in the early part of 1881. Over the next twenty years, Holmes and Watson would engage in a brief, but passionate affair, ending with Watson's marriage to Miss Mary Morstan. We have speculated throughout this series that, on several occasions, Watson had separated from Mary and moved back into Baker Street. It is reasonable to assume, then, that Holmes and Watson's physical relationship continued throughout Watson's marriage (albeit sporadically).

We have also speculated that, wracked with guilt for destroying a marriage and no longer willing to share Watson's affections, Holmes was forced to fake his own death in *The Final Problem*. He returns to reveal himself some three years later, but only after hearing of Mary's passing. Holmes' return signals a new beginning for their relationship, for with Watson's return to Baker Street, we begin to see the slow build up of an emotional, as well as physical, relationship.

As the years pass, this relationship becomes quite serious, Holmes slowly letting down his walls and allowing Watson full access to his heart. Despite this, Holmes has not yet confessed his undying love for Watson; indeed, neither Holmes nor Watson have verbalized their feelings. They have, however, come dangerously close on several occasions, and it is important to note that a little over five years has passed since the events contained within *The Adventure of the Devil's Foot* --the last such declaration. As we begin, then, to examine the subtext contained within *The Three Garridebs*, we will be pleased to note that Holmes' walls have finally crumbled; that he has finally confessed what both Watson and the reader has known for some time.

As mentioned above, *The Three Garridebs* is quite unusual in that Watson fixes the date with utmost certainty. Indeed, the date is confirmed throughout various references in the story, making *The Three Garridebs* one of the easiest cases to date. Watson tells us:

I remember the date very well...

And here we are quite certain that he does. Indeed, in writing this, some twenty-two years after the events contained within, Watson's memory (and notes) prove quite thorough. Here we must suggest that Watson considered these events to be of some significance, and as we reach our conclusion, the reader will undoubtedly understand the why.

Watson does not, of course, list Holmes' reaction to witnessing Watson's injury as the reason, but rather, tells us that the story occurred in the same month Holmes refused a knighthood, hence making it easy to date. While we do not believe this to be the sole reason, here we are more interested in Watson's statement that he is unable to share the reasons Holmes was offered said knighthood.

I only refer to the matter in passing, for in my position of partner and confidant I am obliged to be particularly careful to avoid any indiscretion.

Interesting, is it not, that, in this story, above all others, Watson should refer to himself as Holmes' partner, and then mention avoiding an indiscretion. Here we suspect

that Watson was attempting, through veiled wording, to allude to his relationship with Holmes, for clearly this was meant to be a love story. Indeed, this theory is confirmed as Watson tells us:

Holmes had spent several days in bed, as was his habit from time to time...

We are certain that Watson intended to say *Holmes and I had spent several days in bed*, for why else should Watson think to mention this curiosity? Indeed, the entire introduction is quite fascinating, for Watson is very careful to remind the reader of his and Holmes' relationship. To the student of subtext, it becomes quite obvious, then, that Watson wishes the reader to recall the intimacy between them; another indication that *The Three Garridebs* was meant entirely as a love story. Watson is not documenting Holmes' career, here, but rather, their relationship.

This becomes a reoccurring theme throughout the story. At one point Holmes, in response to John Garrideb's question as to whether Watson need know the details, states:

"We usually work together."

Again we are reminded of the partnership between Holmes and Watson. It is also quite telling that it should be Holmes who comments on their professional association. In doing so, Holmes has instantly reminded the reader of his inadequacies in the matter of love. We do not doubt that Watson, had he thought Holmes would have allowed it, would have made a frank declaration of his feelings. It is Holmes, and Holmes' reluctance to speak on such matters, which has guarded Watson's tongue. Watson knows, as does his reader, that Holmes is incapable of verbalizing the swell of emotions contained within his breast.

Having established the current state of their relationship, Watson then moves on to set the scene. He tells us:

It was twilight of a lovely spring evening, and even Little Ryder Street, one of the smaller offshoots from the Edgware Road, within a stone-cast of old Tyburn Tree of evil memory, looked golden and wonderful in the slanting rays of the setting sun.

Truly this description does not belong in a detective novel. Indeed, it is far more suited to a romance novel, and so, again, we must conclude that *The Adventure of the Three Garridebs* was not, in fact, meant to highlight Holmes' detective skills, but rather, it was meant to highlight a pivotal moment in Holmes and Watson's relationship.

In fact, the entire tone of this story is very indicative of a romance. This is very clearly seen as they sit to discuss the case. Their conversation begins with a compliment:

"Come, Watson, you improve all the time."

Before then moving on to a dire warning:

"This is a more serious matter than I had expected, Watson," said he. "It is fair to tell you so, though I know it will only be an additional reason to you for running your head into danger. I should know my Watson by now. But there is danger, and you should know it."

And finally ending with a heartfelt statement of loyalty:

"Well, it is not the first we have shared, Holmes. I hope it may not be the last."

In examining the above passages, we must first note Holmes' compliment. Clearly, especially given that this is a later case, and that it is entirely likely that Watson has reached his peak and hence is no longer in need (or want) of Holmes' compliments, we must conclude that Holmes had taken to complimenting Watson at times when any other lover might whisper words of endearment.

Next, we must note Holmes' warning. While it is quite apparent that this statement is meant to serve as foreshadowing, we cannot help but note that Holmes appears truly alarmed for Watson's safety. He does not, of course, suggest that Watson stay behind, for Holmes does indeed know *his* Watson. Still, he cannot allow Watson to walk into this case blindly, for Holmes cares far too deeply for Watson to risk losing him.

Finally, in examining Watson's response, we cannot help but feel touched by this statement of loyalty and devotion. Watson cares very little for the danger involved, wishing only to assume his rightful place at Holmes' side.

Holmes accepts this, likely with a smile of genuine affection, but he does not let Watson brush off the danger so easily. Indeed, Watson tells us:

He took a revolver from the drawer and handed it to me.

Never before have we seen Holmes take these precautions, and while Holmes does confess that the man they are after is quite dangerous, we begin to suspect that something more is at play here. Again, we can suggest that this is entirely Watson's doing, Watson wishing to remind his reader of the relationship he shared with Holmes, doing so by exaggerating the events leading up to the conclusion. Alternatively, it is entirely possible that Holmes, bound to Watson as he was, sensed some unseen threat which made him uneasy.

Holmes does not, however, allow this sombre mood to linger. Indeed, having assured himself that Watson was armed, Holmes suggests:

"I'll give you an hour for a siesta, Watson, and then I think it will be time for our Ryder Street adventure."

It is not unreasonable to assume that Holmes joined Watson for this so-called *siesta*. Indeed, we can well imagine exactly how they passed this hour.

The story, however, does not truly begin until the moment Holmes and Watson arrive at Ryder Street and find themselves hidden within the dark recesses of Nathan Garrideb's rooms, awaiting the arrival of John Garrideb, aka, Killer Evans.

They wait in darkness until at last Evans arrives, Holmes waiting until Evans has descended into a hidden room before signalling to Watson:

Holmes touched my wrist as a signal.

The above is quite important, for it sets the stage for what is to come. This brief, lingering touch communicates so much, and it is here that we are reminded of Holmes and Watson's ability to communicate without words. And so, when Evans is alerted to their presence and Watson tells us:

In an instant he had whisked out a revolver from his breast and had fired two shots.

We instinctively know that the events to come will not be communicated entirely with words.

I felt a sudden hot sear as if a red-hot iron had been pressed to my thigh. There was a crash as Holmes's pistol came down on the man's head. I had a vision of him sprawling upon the floor with blood running down his face while Holmes rummaged him for weapons. Then my friend's wiry arms were round me, and he was leading me to a chair.

"You're not hurt, Watson? For God's sake, say that you are not hurt!"

It is quite easy to picture the moment Holmes turns, the pride in his eyes vanishing as he finds Watson bleeding from a gunshot wound; replaced by a horror so acute that Holmes can do nothing but rush to Watson's side and cradle him in his arms. That Holmes should cry out, begging, pleading with God to spare Watson's life, is quite indicative of the depth of Holmes' feelings. Indeed, so profound are Holmes' words and actions that Watson tells us:

It was worth a wound — it was worth many wounds — to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.

One wonders if, twenty years from this moment, Holmes read the above statement and found himself moved, just as Watson was moved by Holmes' reaction. That Watson should willingly accept any injury, just to know this moment, is touching beyond

words. And yet, this is revelation, for Watson clearly speaks of Holmes' heart, and his love. Holmes may not have said the words, but it is clear enough to Watson; Holmes is in love, and no longer capable of hiding it.

This marks a turning point for Holmes, for from this moment on he will cease to hide from Watson. He has bared himself completely, trusting in Watson's dedication and commitment to keep his heart safe. Indeed, even as Watson tells him that it is merely a scratch, Holmes, having now revealed so much, does not retreat behind his cold mask, instead ripping *up my trousers with his pocket-knife* so that he might assure himself of Watson's well being.

Indeed, upon finding Watson unscathed, Holmes does not hesitate in showing his relief.

"You are right," he cried with an immense sigh of relief. "It is quite superficial."

The gates have been opened, Holmes no longer capable of retreat. Horrified by the prospect of almost losing Watson, Holmes does not stop at mere open declarations of his love and affection. No, indeed, Holmes goes a step further and openly declares his willingness to break the laws of England in Watson's defence. Turning to their prisoner, Holmes states:

"By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive."

The thought of Holmes, beating a man to death to avenge his Watson is quite startling, and yet, we can well see it happening, for Holmes knows that he would be lost without his Watson. Watson has become everything to Holmes, and while it is entirely likely that Holmes has known this for some time, here Holmes has cast aside the last of his defences, offering his heart and soul into Watson's keeping.

So brings about the conclusion of *The Three Garridebs*, and Watson, leaning *on Holmes's arm*, soon finds himself back in Baker Street, where we have no doubt that Holmes sought to demonstrate his affections in another, more primal manner; after, of course, Holmes saw to Watson's slight wound.

Lady Frances Carfax

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax* in July of 1902. Watson does not mention a date, but does mention that Lady Frances Carfax's disappearance occurred during the summer season, making July a reasonable month. In addition to this, Holmes references a past event which took place in 1889, and given that Watson is unmarried and living in Baker Street during the case, we can safely set the case after Holmes' return. Finally, Watson's confession of feeling old and arthritic is highly suggestive of a later date. There are, of course, several problems with Baring-Gould's year, and, while Lady Frances Carfax is one of the most challenging cases to fit within any chronology, we must suggest an earlier year. Given Holmes and Watson's interaction throughout the case, Lady Frances Carfax is far better suited to the period between 1897 and 1899. The story was first published in December of 1911.

Synopsis:

Tied to London by a pressing case, Sherlock Holmes sends Dr. Watson onto the Continent to investigate the disappearance of the Lady Frances Carfax. A lone, unwed woman, Holmes fears for her safety, and so Watson picks up her trail, tracing her first through Switzerland, and then into Germany, and finally into France, where Holmes arrives in time to drag Watson back to London. It is there that the story takes a sinister twist, for Holmes has discovered that the Lady Frances Carfax had had some dealings with a man named Holy Peter, aka Dr. Shlessinger, a man Holmes fears capable of murder. When the Lady Frances Carfax's jewels turn up in a pawn shop, Holmes is quick to spring into action, arranging to have Peter's wife followed. It is then that Holmes first learns that Peter's has ordered a coffin which can only be described as out of the ordinary. Fearing the worst, Holmes forces his way into Peter's home, only to discover a deceased elderly woman who is clearly not the Lady Frances Carfax. It'll take a long night before Holmes realizes that the key to the case lies in the dimensions of the coffin.

The Subtext:

"But why Turkish?" asked Mr. Sherlock Holmes, gazing fixedly at my boots. I was reclin-

ing in a cane-backed chair at the moment, and my protruded feet had attracted his ever-active attention.

“English,” I answered in some surprise. “I got them at Latimer’s, in Oxford Street.”

Holmes smiled with an expression of weary patience.

“The bath!” he said; “the bath! Why the relaxing and expensive Turkish rather than the invigorating home-made article?”

So begins *The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax*, and here, too, we begin our attempts to date this story. Before doing this, however, we first wish to draw attention to the playful banter which sets the tone for this story. Indeed, throughout *Lady Frances Carfax*, Holmes and Watson engage in several similar conversations, their playfulness quite apparent.

So too is Holmes’ jealousy, for Holmes clearly asks why Watson sought relaxation at a bath house when he could have had the *invigorating home-made article*. It is quite obvious here that Holmes was not speaking of an English bathhouse, but rather, of the bathtub at Baker Street, and Holmes’ willingness to help Watson unwind.

This type of behaviour is very reminiscent of the early part of their established relationship. Indeed, this case cannot have occurred long after Holmes’ return, Holmes’ tentativeness and uncertainty having vanished with the passing of years. There is a familiarity here which does suggest a committed relationship, and yet, Holmes’ uncertainty can be seen as proof that this commitment is relatively new.

Watson allays Holmes’ fears by stating that his trip to the Turkish bath was entirely medical in nature. Holmes, however, is not entirely convinced, and so, when Watson asks for an explanation regarding how Holmes knew he had attended the baths, Holmes states:

“The train of reasoning is not very obscure, Watson,” said Holmes with a mischievous twinkle. “It belongs to the same elementary class of deduction which I should illustrate if I were to ask you who shared your cab in your drive this morning.”

Again, we see Holmes’ jealousy come to the forefront as he questions who shared Watson’s cab and, again, this is an indication of an earlier date (possibly shortly before the events contained within *The Devil’s Foot*). There is still playfulness here, however, Holmes managing to hide his doubt quite well. Indeed, Watson speaks to a mischievous twinkle in Holmes’ eyes, suggesting that the bond between remains quite strong, despite this doubt. Holmes may worry on occasion, but he has the utmost confidence in Watson.

In fact, Watson, without responding directly to Holmes' fears, manages to scold Holmes for even suggesting that he might stray. To this Holmes cannot help but extend his congratulations, for clearly Holmes knows that he cannot hide his true feelings from Watson.

"I don't admit that a fresh illustration is an explanation," said I with some asperity.

"Bravo, Watson! A very dignified and logical remonstrance."

And so Holmes admits his foolishness, for he should know by now not to doubt Watson's loyalty. In this case, Watson's remonstrance is well deserved.

Holmes has not, however, answered Watson's original question, and so he continues, his response, one must agree, quite amusing:

"You are in the habit of doing up your boots in a certain way. I see them on this occasion fastened with an elaborate double bow, which is not your usual method of tying them. You have, therefore, had them off."

Remarkable, is it not, that Holmes is so fully aware of Watson and his habits that he can tell when someone other than Watson has tied his laces. Unfortunately, this does not help us in our dating, for we have no doubt that Holmes has been aware of Watson's boot-tying habits for some time now. Indeed, it is quite easy to imagine that Holmes knew all of Watson's habits; the most intimate included.

Holmes' deduction leads Holmes to the assumption that Watson is in need of a break. He suggests a trip to the Continent, stating:

"You say that you have had it because you need a change. Let me suggest that you take one. How would Lausanne do, my dear Watson--first-class tickets and all expenses paid on a princely scale?"

Watson's response, naturally, is to shout:

"Splendid!"

And here we can easily imagine that Watson assumed Holmes would be travelling with him.

Sadly, this is not the case, for Holmes wishes for Watson to go on ahead and begin their investigation alone. This is not an unfamiliar sight, for on several occasions Holmes has sent Watson in his stead. While this can be seen a sign of acute trust, the dating of this adventure negates what would otherwise be a remarkable gesture on Holmes' behalf. Indeed, Watson does not at all seem touched by Holmes' trust, instead coming across as rather disappointed; Watson likely having looked forward to spending a romantic few days with Holmes in Switzerland.

Indeed, upon hearing of Holmes' plan, Watson expresses incredulity, to which Holmes is forced to reply:

"Go, then, my dear Watson, and if my humble counsel can ever be valued at so extravagant a rate as two pence a word, it waits your disposal night and day at the end of the Continental wire."

Holmes reassurances seem enough to quell Watson's reluctance, and so he heads to Lausanne to begin his investigation. This marks a very interesting twist in the case (and indeed, one quite reminiscent of the events found within *The Hound of the Baskervilles*) for throughout Watson's investigation he is forced to correspond with Holmes through telegrams. And write Watson does; indeed, he makes frequent reference to the wires he sends to Holmes, suggesting that they were numerous.

Holmes, of course, responds, and Watson tells us that his replies were often half-humorous. Their correspondence is quite light, despite the nature of the case, and one is instantly reminded of a long-distance communication between lovers. Holmes' playfulness, combined with Watson's eagerness, makes one wonder if it were these correspondences which later fell into the hands of Charles Augustus Milverton. We cannot doubt that Holmes' letters were quite sprightly indeed.

Eventually Watson's quest leads him to France. It is there, in the small town of Montpellier, that he stumbles across the man he believes to have been following the Lady Frances Carfax. Watson accosts him in the street, demanding to know where Lady Carfax is. The man's response is to give *a bellow of anger and spring upon [Watson] like a tiger*.

This leads to a very interesting meeting, for Watson tells us:

His hand was on my throat and my senses were nearly gone before an unshaven French ouvrier in a blue blouse darted out from a cabaret opposite, with a cudgel in his hand, and struck my assailant a sharp crack over the forearm, which made him leave go his hold.

Naturally, it is Holmes, disguised as a French worker, and wearing a blue blouse, that comes to Watson's rescue. Clearly, Holmes does not particularly like other men touching his Watson. He is certainly unwilling to stand on the sidelines and allow Watson to be assaulted.

We soon learn that Holmes' earlier demonstration of trust has not carried through the investigation, for as soon as Watson has recovered Holmes states:

"Well, Watson," said he, "a very pretty hash you have made of it! I rather think you had better come back with me to London by the night express."

The above statement has led to some rather interesting speculation, including the possibility that this case may have been a forgery. Indeed, as it was Watson who learned whom the Lady Frances Carfax left Baden with, it was Watson who essentially solved the case (even if Watson did not know it). Indeed, all of Watson's observations were necessary for Holmes to form his conclusion regarding Dr. Shlessinger and his wife.

In fact, Holmes formed this opinion before leaving London, and yet still followed Watson to the Continent. There is little in Holmes' actions that makes sense (throughout this case, actually) and this has led several scholars to date the case shortly after *The Devil's Foot*, suggesting that Holmes was still recovering from his exposure to the drug (this also explains Watson's need to seek medical treatment in the Turkish baths).

Oddly enough, Watson does not seem off-put by Holmes' arrival, telling us:

An hour afterwards, Sherlock Holmes, in his usual garb and style, was seated in my private room at the hotel.

Here we must simply borrow an expression worthy of the town they visited and state: *Ooh, la, la.*

Soon after, Holmes and Watson return to London, where Holmes begins investigating Dr. Shlessinger. It is not, however, until Lady Carfax's jewels turn up in a pawn shop that Holmes is able to set someone on Shlessinger's trail. This trail eventually leads to an undertaker, and upon arriving at the address, Holmes requests:

"Would go in, Watson? Your appearance inspires confidence."

Amusing, is it not, that Holmes, despite his jealous streak, is still willing to pimp Watson when it comes to their work.

Holmes' faith in Watson's charms does not go unfounded, and soon Watson returns with the information needed. Holmes, knowing now that time is of the essence, and that they cannot wait on a warrant, asks:

"Are you armed?"

To which Watson replies:

"My stick!"

While again this can be seen as evidence against Baring-Gould's date (had this case taken place shortly after the events in 3GAR, as Baring-Gould suggests, then we would fully expect to see a recently shot Watson carrying something a little more substantial than a stick) here we are more interested in Holmes' concern, and Watson's enthusiastic reassurance. Clearly, Watson knows just what to say to alleviate Holmes' worry.

Together, Holmes and Watson force their way into Shlessinger's home only to have

Shlessinger accuse Holmes of being a common burglar. Holmes agrees, stating:

"My companion is also a dangerous ruffian."

It should be noted that Holmes does not need to search for these words. Indeed, they seem quite practiced and one cannot help but question whether this was the first time Watson masqueraded as a dangerous ruffian. It is entirely possible that we have been given a glimpse into Holmes and Watson's... private life. Indeed, one almost feels the need to reprimand Holmes; clearly this is neither the time nor the place to engage in role-play.

Holmes and Watson do eventually find the coffin, complete with the body of an elderly woman who is clearly not the Lady Frances Carfax. While relieved, this discovery leaves Holmes' quite irritable, for Lady Carfax's whereabouts are once again shrouded in darkness. Indeed, Holmes passes a sleepless night before finally putting the pieces together. The next morning, Watson tells us:

Finally, just after I had been called in the morning, he rushed into my room. He was in his dressing-gown, but his pale, hollow-eyed face told me that his night had been a sleepless one.

Endearing, is it not, that Holmes' first thought should be to rush to Watson's side. Clearly Holmes felt quite guilty for abandoning their bed in favour of his thoughts.

Watson does not, of course, begrudge Holmes the night passed alone, for it soon becomes clear that Holmes' overnight vigil was quite needed, Holmes managing to deduce the purpose behind Shlessinger's singular coffin purchase.

Having woken Watson, Holmes all but drags him back to Dr. Shlessinger's home, where he is only just in time to prevent Shlessinger from carrying out his plans to bury the Lady Frances Carfax alive.

Tearing off the coffin's lid, Holmes finds Lady Carfax sealed inside, overcome by chloroform fumes. It is here that Holmes becomes quite desperate, shouting:

"Is she gone, Watson? Is there a spark left? Surely we are not too late!"

Holmes is out of his depth here, and must rely entirely on Watson's medical knowledge. Watson reassures Holmes that Lady Carfax is still alive, but only just. Indeed, it is later revealed that the poor woman has been rendered senseless, Holmes and Watson forced to turn over her care to Mr. Green; a man hopelessly devoted to Lady Carfax's well being.

The case draws to a close, and Holmes and Watson are able to return again to Baker Street. Throughout this essay we have attempted to pinpoint a date for The Disappear-

ance of Lady Frances Carfax, and while this has proven quite difficult, it is your author's opinion that the story took place in the early summer of 1897. It is quite clear that they are involved in a serious relationship, and yet we see too many instances of doubt and uncertainty to date the case any later.

The Illustrious Client

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client* in September of 1902. As this is the exact date given by Watson, we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in November of 1924.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes is commissioned by the agent of an illustrious client to aid in preventing the marriage of Violet de Merville to Adelbert Gruner, an Austrian Baron suspected of having murdered his late wife. Gruner has charmed Miss de Merville completely, though; indeed, she is quite obsessed with Gruner and is incapable of thinking ill towards him. Holmes' task seems quite insurmountable, but that quickly changes when he is introduced to Miss Kitty Winters; Baron Gruner's last mistress, and a woman much scorned. Through Miss Winters, Holmes learns of a diary kept by the Baron which he suspects will go a long way towards convincing Miss de Merville of her folly. Obtaining this evidence will prove quite the challenge, especially when Holmes is set upon by two of Gruner's ruffians in what amounts to a murderous attack.

The Subtext:

"It can't hurt now," was Mr. Sherlock Holmes's comment when, for the tenth time in as many years, I asked his leave to reveal the following narrative.

So begins *The Adventure of the Illustrious Client*, and here we are given an interesting glance into Holmes and Watson's later years. As the story was first published in 1924, we can assume that Watson's first request came in the early part of 1914, or the late part of 1913. This is already set some ten years into Holmes' retirement. It becomes evident, then, that Holmes and Watson have been in close contact between the years 1913 and 1924. We have previously examined the possibility of Watson retiring with Holmes to the countryside, and we see here in this case ample evidence to suggest that Watson has done exactly that.

We will return to this in a moment, but first, allow us to examine a very curious statement regarding Holmes and Watson's habits. Watson tells us:

Both Holmes and I had a weakness for the Turkish bath.

This is a fairly interesting statement, especially given the modern connotation of public bath houses (public bath houses have long been a meeting place for gay men). For years bath houses were seen by the gay community as safe havens (although the first recorded raid on a public bath house occurred in 1903, in New York). In fact, gay bath houses in London can be traced back to the fifteenth century, their popularity surging during the later half of the nineteenth century at a time when homosexual acts were illegal.

That is not, of course, to say that all bath houses were frequented by homosexual clients. The stigma surrounding bath houses, however, was quite well known in 1902; so much so that already the Turkish bath houses in London were experiencing a sharp decline in popularity due to pressure from the police and politicians. With this in mind, let us turn to Watson's next statement:

It was over a smoke in the pleasant lassitude of the drying-room that I have found him [Holmes] less reticent and more human than anywhere else.

While we cannot doubt that Holmes and Watson attended the baths for their healing properties, we must also suggest that their frank enjoyment of the Turkish baths stemmed from another purpose. In fact, we have no doubt that Holmes was quite amiable, for we can well imagine how relaxed he became during these visits.

Indeed, Watson then goes on to tell us:

On the upper floor of the Northumberland Avenue establishment there is an isolated corner where two couches lie side by side, and it was on these that we lay upon September 3, 1902, the day when my narrative begins.

One can easily picture Holmes and Watson, dressed only in the towels common of patrons to the bath houses, lying side by side, and basking in the afterglow of their... treatment. Indeed, we have no doubt that Holmes, at least, is quite naked, for Watson next tells us:

I had asked him whether anything was stirring, and for answer he had shot his long, thin, nervous arm out of the sheets which enveloped him and had drawn an envelope from the inside pocket of the coat which hung beside him.

Clearly, then, the entire opening scene of this story would be quite welcome (and familiar) were it adapted by the gay porn industry.

Holmes does, indeed, have something stirring, as Watson discovers upon reading the letter Holmes has handed him. The letter is quite vague, lacking in details, and so Holmes can only speculate, stating:

"I am bound, therefore, to hope that it is not a false scent and that he has some real need for our assistance."

The conversation which follows, one must agree, is quite telling:

"Our?"

"Well, if you will be so good, Watson."

"I shall be honoured."

Long has Holmes given up the pretence of running his own practice. His work has become Watson's work; Watson's work his, and so Holmes does not hesitate in offering *our assistance*. Quite amusing, is it not, that Watson should seek out reassurance (and this will come into play as we continue our examination, for we will soon discover that their cosy existence in Baker Street has been altered) and that Holmes should give it so readily.

Holmes offers Watson the hour, suggesting they *can put the matter out of our heads*. It is quite clear that Holmes means to spend said hour in the bath house, relaxing and engaging in... other activities.

It is soon after their visit that Watson first tells us:

I was living in my own rooms in Queen Anne Street at the time...

This statement has led to much speculation amongst scholars. Indeed, it has even led several scholars to suggest a third marriage for Watson. Here, however, we suggest an alternate solution. While undoubtedly there is a Queen Anne Street in London, we suspect that here Watson was actually speaking in code. In fact, it is your author's opinion that Watson had already begun the transition from London to Sussex, and that, there, Holmes and Watson had purchased a villa dating back to the Queen Anne period. Watson, desiring to set up a practice, went on ahead of Holmes so that he might establish himself.

Holmes knew his retirement was imminent (although, he had yet to decide on a firm date) and so allowed Watson to move to Sussex ahead of him, knowing the plan would be the best course of action. Watson, we will soon see, does not spend much of his time in Sussex, choosing instead to sleep at Baker Street.

This theory, we must also note, explains Holmes and Watson's desire for a day-time rendezvous at the Turkish bath house. Undoubtedly Watson had just arrived back in town, and undoubtedly Mrs. Hudson was up and about in Baker Street. Where else, then, could Holmes and Watson slip away to so that they might rejoice in their reunion?

We must also suggest that Watson's early move to Sussex came in part with Holmes and Watson's desire to minimize scandal. It is quite likely that the public (and perhaps Scotland Yard) were beginning to speculate regarding the depth of Holmes and Watson's relationship.

Their ruse, however, does not appear to work, for soon after their return to Baker Street we are introduced to their client, a Colonel Sir James Damery, who states:

"Of course, I was prepared to find Dr. Watson," he remarked with a courteous bow.

It is quite obvious, then, that Holmes and Watson are fooling no one.

Sir James does not remain long in Holmes and Watson's company. He briefly relays his client's desire to detach Miss Violet de Merville from the audacious Baron, requesting Holmes' aid in finding some way to reveal the Baron's true character. Holmes agrees, and so Sir James takes his leave. It is after Sir James' leaving, and indeed, after Holmes sets out to find some means of bringing the Baron down, that Watson tells us:

It was not possible for me to follow the immediate steps taken by my friend, for I had some pressing professional business of my own, but I met him by appointment that evening at Simpson's, where, sitting at a small table in the front window and looking down at the rushing stream of life in the Strand, he told me something of what had passed.

We see here, again, proof that Watson was in the process of setting up his new country practice in Sussex, for what other professional business could Watson have? He has given up his London practice. His writing is on hold. Indeed, the sole profession left to Watson is Holmes' practice. We must therefore conclude that Holmes entrusted the whole of their arrangements to Watson's capable hands. We have no doubt that Watson arranged every detail regarding their move to Sussex, and that Holmes waited for the dust to settle before reluctantly leaving Baker Street, following Watson to what would become their new home. Indeed, it does not surprise us in the least that this process took well over a year.

Returning to Simpson's, and Holmes' report of his interview with the Baron, Holmes, in describing his meeting with Baron Gruner, tells Watson:

"Well, Watson, I love to come to close grips with my man."

To which we can only shake our heads and smile. Truly, Holmes; we are only too aware.

Their discussion continues, Holmes relaying Gruner's threats, much to Watson's horror. It is at the conclusion of their meal that Holmes suggests:

“When you have finished your coffee you had best come home with me...”

Note that Holmes does not suggest that Watson return to Baker Street. Instead, he clearly suggests that Watson return *home*, implying that, despite Watson’s move to Sussex, both he and Holmes still consider Baker Street home. There is an old adage suggesting that home is where the heart is, and it is quite clear here that home, for Watson, is where Holmes is.

Watson does indeed return to Baker Street, but the next day Holmes heads out to investigate the case on his own (likely leaving Watson to transfer their bank account to a Sussex branch). That evening, Watson tells us:

I did not see Holmes again until the following evening when we dined once more at our Strand restaurant.

Note Watson’s language here. He clearly refers to *our* Strand restaurant. There is no possible way to read the above passage and not admit to Holmes and Watson’s relationship. Clearly, they are a couple.

Their dinner ends with what will prove to be a dire warning, Holmes stating:

“I’ll keep in touch with you, Watson, for it is more than likely that you will have your part to play, though it is just possible that the next move may lie with them rather than with us.”

It is clear that Holmes is still forging the links of his chain, and that Watson is still quite consumed with the transition, for two days later Watson tells us:

I think I could show you the very paving-stone upon which I stood when my eyes fell upon the placard, and a pang of horror passed through my very soul. It was between the Grand Hotel and Charing Cross Station, where a one-legged news-vendor displayed his evening papers. The date was just two days after the last conversation. There, black upon yellow, was the terrible news-sheet:

Murderous attack on Sherlock Holmes.

We can well imagine Watson’s horror here, for he has been neglecting Holmes in favour of planning their future, and now, in this single instance, Watson sees the fragility of that future. Indeed, Watson’s reaction is quite telling, for he soon tells us:

I think I stood stunned for some moments. Then I have a confused recollection of snatching at a paper, of the remonstrance of the man, whom I had not paid, and, finally, of standing in the doorway of a chemist’s shop while I turned up the fateful paragraph.

That Watson was so distraught that he might steal a paper, without realizing it, is quite indicative of Holmes’ importance. Clearly, Watson is in shock, likely horrified

by the prospect of losing Holmes.

His shock does not last long, however, the strength of his worry overcoming his inaction as Watson tells us:

I need not say that my eyes had hardly glanced over the paragraph before I had sprung into a hansom and was on my way to Baker Street.

The image of Watson, rushing frantically to Holmes' side, uncertain as to Holmes' welfare, is quite touching. Indeed, the reader cannot help but feel the anxiety and dread which must have sat heavily upon Watson's shoulders.

Watson's arrival at Baker Street comes swiftly, and, after interviewing the surgeon, Watson tells us:

With this [the surgeon's] permission I stole into the darkened room. The sufferer was wide awake, and I heard my name in a hoarse whisper. The blind was three-quarters down, but one ray of sunlight slanted through and struck the bandaged head of the injured man. A crimson patch had soaked through the white linen compress. I sat beside him and bent my head.

The whole of the above paragraph is quite overwhelming. We can almost see the tentativeness in Watson's footsteps; hear the relief in Holmes' hoarse whisper at Watson's arrival. Watson is quite gentle in the above scene, taking particular care to describe the fullness of Holmes' injuries (which must have, at the time, terrified Watson beyond speech). Finally, we are given the image of Watson sitting gingerly at Holmes' side, likely reaching out a hand to lace his fingers with Holmes'. It is quite evident, in both Holmes and Watson's actions, that this is not the meeting of two mere friends. Indeed, the above scene speaks not only of Watson's fear and worry, but of Watson's love and devotion, and Holmes' gratitude at having Watson in his life.

Holmes even goes so far as to reassure Watson, wanting, no doubt, to ease Watson of the guilt and terror which gripped his heart. Holmes states:

"All right, Watson. Don't look so scared," he muttered in a very weak voice. "It's not as bad as it seems."

This seems to break the spell Watson is under, for his tentativeness soon fades, and Watson vows:

"Of course, it was that damned fellow who set them on. I'll go and thrash the hide off him if you give the word."

We do not, of course, doubt Watson's word, for it is quite easy to picture Watson seeking vengeance on Holmes' behalf. Indeed, one can easily imagine Watson's rage

turning to murderous actions, should only Holmes give the word.

Holmes does not give the word, instead requesting that Watson exaggerate his injuries as part of some plot which Holmes does not reveal. Watson accepts this, reminding the reader of Holmes' love for a dramatic conclusion. It is quite clear that Watson feels no ill will towards being caught up in Holmes' plot, Watson telling us:

I was nearer him than anyone else, and yet I was always conscious of the gap between.

One can easily tell that Watson is thankful to be as close as he is, for it is quite clear that Holmes guards his heart closely. Indeed, throughout the whole of Canon (and, consequently, Holmes' life) none save Watson can claim closeness to Holmes. Truly, Watson has been granted privileged access to a heart few have witnessed.

Indeed, we see further proof of Watson's willingness to aid Holmes without explanation, Watson stating:

"I am here to be used, Holmes."

Here we cannot doubt that, for the first time since his assault, Holmes wished that his injuries were less severe. Indeed, one can only picture the dozen or so scenarios which popped into Holmes' head at Watson's statement.

Holmes does, of course, find an alternate method of using Watson, and so Watson visits Baron Gruner under the guise of a Chinese pottery expert. His ploy works, despite the Baron's suspicion, for Watson's distraction allows Holmes to burgle Gruner's study and make off with his diary. It is this diary which concludes the case, Miss de Merville breaking off her engagement to Baron Gruner upon seeing its contents.

And so the case comes to a close, Watson, oddly enough, still ensconced in Baker Street, despite his attempts to convince his reader otherwise. Indeed, while we do not doubt that Watson had, at times, lived away from Baker Street, we do not for a moment believe that he had moved to Queen Anne Street.

The Red Circle

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Red Circle* in September of 1902. Watson does not give us a date, but as Baring-Gould dates this case after *The Adventure of the Illustrious client*, and as Watson is clearly living in Baker Street, we must question Baring-Gould's date. Watson also refers to the gloom of a London winter evening, suggesting that Baring-Gould's month is also incorrect. Finally, the inclusion of Inspector Gregson, who appears only in the earlier Canon, suggests a date even before the hiatus (or, pending that, shortly after Holmes' return). Indeed, it is your author's opinion that the case took place during the winter of 1895. The story was first published in March of 1911.

Synopsis:

Mrs. Warren, a local landlady, seeks Holmes' aid in solving the mystery of her mysterious lodger. He arrived several weeks ago, and yet she has not seen the man since the first night when he went out briefly, only to return late in the evening. He rings when he wants his supper, and communicates all the rest of his desires by printing single words in pencil on torn slips of paper. Although he is paying her double the rent, Mrs. Warren is at her wits end, the man's pacing driving her to distraction. Having heard her case, Holmes automatically assumes a substitution has been made. With that in mind, he arranges to get a look at Mrs. Warren's lodger, only to discover that he is, in fact, a she. Armed with this new knowledge, Holmes is able to put the pieces of the case together (with a little help from the agony column of the *Daily Gazette*). His insight will lead him to uncover two desperate refuges, hiding from a terrible secret organization known as the Red Circle.

The Subtext:

The Adventure of the Red Circle begins midway through Holmes' interview with a client, Mrs. Warren. Mrs. Warren has some concerns regarding her lodger, and wishes for Holmes to look into the matter and then instruct her on what to do. Holmes, reluctantly, agrees.

As Mrs. Warren tells her tale, Holmes' interest is peaked, and although he can do

nothing at this point, he does agree to take on the case. This leisurely start is quite interesting, for it allows Holmes and Watson plenty of time for relaxation. Indeed, the very next morning Watson tells us:

So it proved; for in the morning I found my friend standing on the hearthrug with his back to the fire and a smile of complete satisfaction upon his face.

Here, in addition to Holmes' smug satisfaction (which is suggestive in and of itself) we are able to loosely pinpoint a date. It is obvious that Watson is living in Baker Street, just as it is obvious that relations between the two are quite intimate. The fact that Holmes has descended from Watson's room before Watson's waking, however, speaks to a slightly earlier date. We can safely say that Holmes has returned from his hiatus, as we are no longer witness to the tentativeness found pre-hiatus, and yet, it is obviously still quite early in this new phase of their relationship, for Holmes is feeling quite pleased with himself, and yet, still has enough sense of mind to vacate Watson's rooms before Mrs. Hudson brings up breakfast.

Sadly, Watson is not given the chance to demonstrate his own smug satisfaction (and we cannot doubt that Watson was quite pleased by Holmes' reaction) for they are soon interrupted by the arrival of Mrs. Warren. She tells the story of her husband's abduction that very morning, and of how he was driven an hour outside of town only to be dumped on the side of the road.

Holmes eventually agrees to pay Mrs. Warren a visit in hopes of seeing her lodger for himself. It is here that we are given additional evidence for Watson living in Baker Street, for, having witnessed Mrs. Warren's lodger first hand, Holmes states:

"I think, Watson, we can discuss this business better in our own quarters."

Holmes' reference to *our own quarters* leaves little doubt as to where Watson is living.

Having returned to Baker Street, Holmes, searching the agony columns, finds the reference he is looking for and is able to deduce that something of importance is to happen that very evening. With this in mind, Holmes and Watson return to Mrs. Warren's house where they lie in wait for a promised signal. The signal comes, but before it can be completed, the candle is put out and the house across the street falls into darkness.

Quite alarmed, Holmes heads out to investigate, only to discover that Inspector Gregson has the building under surveillance. Their conversation, one must agree, is quite fascinating:

"Holmes!" he cried.

"Why, Gregson!" said my companion as he shook hands with the Scotland Yard detective. "Journeys end with lovers' meetings. What brings you here?"

Curious, is it not, that Holmes should think to quote from Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. One wonders why Holmes chose to greet Inspector Gregson with that particular quote. Oddly enough, this is not the first time Holmes has employed this quote. In fact, it is used during The Empty House (further evidence that this story should be given an earlier date, for if it did occur shortly after The Empty House, and Holmes had just seen (or read) Twelfth Night, then one can easily understand his desire to quote from it). One must question whether Inspector Gregson is an old lover of Holmes. Is this, perhaps, why he is not seen in the later Canon? Did Watson put his foot down and request that Holmes not associate with his exes?

It is not long after this strange meeting that Holmes realizes that he and Scotland Yard are working at cross-purposes. Scotland Yard, along with a Pinkerton detective, are searching for a man named Black Gorgiano. As it turns out, Holmes is investigating a couple by the name of Lucca, who are fleeing from Black Gorgiano. As they head inside, they discover the body of Gorgiano, and it is not long after that that Holmes signals for Mrs. Lucca and finally learns the reason she has been hiding inside Mrs. Warren's lodging house.

As the case comes to a close, Holmes, turning to Watson, states:

"Well, Watson, you have one more specimen of the tragic and grotesque to add to your collection. By the way, it is not eight o'clock, and a Wagner night at Covent Garden! If we hurry, we might be in time for the second act."

We see in this final statement two noteworthy comments. The first is Holmes statement that Watson has earned a story to add to his chronicles. Again, this is indicative of an earlier, yet post-hiatus, date, for Watson does at this point have a collection. We will, of course, recall that Holmes has forbidden Watson from publishing his cases, and yet, we cannot doubt that Watson filed his notes very neatly away, awaiting the day when Holmes once again allowed him to bring out his pen.

We turn next to Holmes' invitation to dinner and a show. A more clear date we have never seen, and yet it is quite interesting that this case should end with Holmes and Watson seeking out a night on the town. One must speculate, then, that this case occurred early in their relationship, for what else would warrant such courtship? Clearly, Holmes is putting some effort into his wooing of Watson, and clearly Watson is quite

thrilled by said wooing.

While not definitive, when added to the evidence found elsewhere in this story, it is quite safe to assume that Holmes and Watson's relationship was still relatively new, and yet, quite serious. Therefore, a date of 1895 is quite probable. Holmes has returned from the dead, Watson has returned to Baker Street, and they are both still learning the ins and outs of one another, and their newfound intimacy.

The Blanched Soldier

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier* in January of 1903. This is the exact date given by Holmes (i.e. Watson, as we will see in our examination of authorship) giving us no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in October 1926. It is interesting to note that Watson published a story for each of the months September through December in 1926, with two of these claiming to have been authored by Holmes.

Synopsis:

In an unusual twist, *The Blanched Soldier* sees Sherlock Holmes assuming the role of narrator as he tells the story of Mr. James M. Dodd. James is searching frantically for his missing friend, Godfrey Emsworth, and believes something sinister is going on in Godfrey's family home. James, upon a recent visit with Godfrey's parents, woke in the middle of the night to find Godfrey's face pressed up against his bedroom window, but when he went out to investigate, all signs of Godfrey had vanished. Godfrey's parents insist that they sent their son on a voyage around the world, but James is certain that Godfrey is being hidden somewhere on the family estate; though, to what end, James does not know. Despite finding the case rather elementary, Holmes agrees to accompany James to Godfrey's family estate, where, with a single written word, Holmes is able to unravel the entire mystery.

The Subtext:

Before we begin our examination of the subtext contained within this story, we must first examine the question of authorship. Indeed, only one other story (*The Mazarin Stone*) has occasioned such speculation.

There are, of course, several problems with accepting Holmes as the narrator. The first being that Holmes, despite his years of criticism, writes using the exact style favoured by Watson. Even if Holmes had hoped to emulate Watson's style, one would expect at least a little difference. That Holmes would emulate Watson's style must be questioned also, for why would Holmes, who so often scorned Watson's writing, seek to duplicate it (even if he does grudgingly admit that Watson's style is necessary to

reach a broader audience).

Then, of course, we have the case itself. Holmes himself calls it elementary, so why chose to document it? Indeed, one would suspect that, were Holmes to pick up his pen, he would concentrate on a case which showcased his powers of observation and deduction. This case demonstrates neither. In fact, the case itself is much more in Watson's line, for it is ripe with romanticisms.

Finally, although we have commented on the style of the story, and have admitted that it is too similar to Watson's to be mere coincidence, we must acknowledge that the story itself is far from good. We know Holmes to be a good story-teller (*The Gloria Scott* and *The Musgrave Ritual* are prime examples of this) so one would expect a case written by Holmes to present the same traits which made *MUSG* and *GLOR* so interesting to read.

Keeping our above objections in mind, we must now consider several theories regarding the story's authorship.

The most plausible theory (and the one which we will adapt for the remainder of this decoding) is that the story was written by Watson, but that Watson, for whatever reason, wrote the story from Holmes' point of view.

The most implausible scenario is that Holmes is, in fact, the narrator, and that he, not knowing how to write a story, copied Watson's style to the letter, thus resulting in a poorly told tale.

The third theory (and while entirely possible, it is still not very probable) suggests that the story is a complete fake; a pastiche written by person or persons unknown.

As mentioned above, we have chosen to accept that the story was written by Watson. It is entirely probable that Watson, living almost exclusively in Sussex at this point, heard the tale second hand from Holmes (either in a personal interview or via telephone/telegram/letter) and decided to write the story from Holmes' point of view.

Recall that Watson has been living on and off in Sussex for the past few months. During this particular case, Watson was away from Baker Street, and so unable to assist Holmes in the case (although we do not doubt that it was Watson who recommended Holmes' specialist). Upon his return to Baker Street, Holmes filled Watson in on the details of the case, and, struck by a romantic story of friendship and forbidden love, Watson expressed his desire to publish the story.

Sadly, having not been there personally, Watson was forced to choose between three alternatives. He could write the story from a third person point of view. He could write

the story in the same manner in which he wrote MUSG and GLOR. Or, he could write the story from Holmes' point of view.

Seeing an opportunity, Watson chose the latter, for by writing from Holmes' point of view, Watson could further his attempts to keep his relationship with Holmes from the public eye, and feign a gradual decline in their relationship. Indeed, Watson even goes so far as to fabricate a second wife.

All of this, of course, makes parsing the subtext quite challenging. We shall, however, endeavour to try.

I would take this opportunity to remark that if I burden myself with a companion in my various little inquiries it is not done out of sentiment or caprice, but it is that Watson has some remarkable characteristics of his own to which in his modesty he has given small attention amid his exaggerated estimates of my own performances. A confederate who foresees your conclusions and course of action is always dangerous, but one to whom each development comes as a perpetual surprise, and to whom the future is always a closed book, is indeed an ideal helpmate.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of assuming Watson's authorship is that, throughout the story, Holmes makes several references to Watson and Watson's place in his life. This has led several scholars to reject Watson as the author simply because Watson is, as Holmes so elegantly puts it, quite modest.

Here we must suggest that Watson anticipated this reaction; he knew that he could not write a story from Holmes' point of view without alluding to himself from a third person perspective, and so that is exactly what he did.

We have mentioned Watson's modesty above, and so we must automatically discount the concept of Watson inventing such a statement. This leaves, then, only one option; that Holmes had, in fact, made a similar statement at some point in time during their relationship. It becomes clear, then, that Watson has merely reworked one of Holmes' comments to fit within the confines of the story. If this is the case, then we see a true compliment indeed, for Holmes clearly acknowledges Watson's intelligence and importance.

We see this on several occasions throughout the story, Watson re-hashing previous conversations with Holmes in order to convince his reader that Holmes is, in fact, the story's author. The most obvious example of this rests in Watson's invention of a second (or third, according to Baring-Gould) wife:

The good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I

can recall in our association. I was alone.

It is quite easy to picture Holmes referring to Watson's marriage to Miss Morstan as a selfish act, and so when Watson decided to allude to his non-existent marriage, the sentiment likely came back to him. The above statement has the added benefit of reaffirming Holmes as the author.

We do not, of course, doubt that Watson has fabricated this marriage. It is entirely too convenient, and entirely too inconsistent, to be anything other than a fabrication. We have suggested above that Watson was, in fact, dividing his time between Sussex and Baker Street, and that Watson was residing in Sussex during this case --hence Watson's absence. Watson's addition of a wife, then, can be seen as a mere literary device, meant to distract attention from Holmes and Watson's cozy co-habitation in Sussex (it is entirely likely that too many rumours had surfaced concerning the once famous detective and his doctor who were living in a single bedroom villa on the outskirts of town). In short, this second wife is Watson's attempt at damage control.

As Watson does not appear in the case, or, indeed, the story, we must turn now away from Holmes and Watson, and examine the plot of the story itself. It is here, through the tale of James Dodd And Godfrey Emsworth, that we gather our strongest evidence for a relationship between Holmes and Watson. Curious, is it not, that Watson should choose to abandon Holmes for a wife in a story revolving around two clearly homosexual characters. We will see, as the story progresses, that the relationship between James and Godfrey (and note the similarities between the names James and John, and Godfrey and Sherlock) is meant to represent the relationship between Holmes and Watson.

There is ample evidence throughout *The Blanched Soldier* to suggest that Godfrey was, in fact, James Dodd's lover. In fact, James, when describing Godfrey to Holmes, states:

"There was not a finer lad in the regiment. We formed a friendship — the sort of friendship which can only be made when one lives the same life and shares the same joys and sorrows. He was my mate — and that means a good deal in the Army. We took the rough and the smooth together for a year of hard fighting."

A very suggestive statement, to be sure!

But not more suggestive than James' mere presence, for James hires Holmes to help him find Godfrey; an act very indicative of the love James bore for Godfrey.

We see, too, evidence of society's rejection of homosexual love in James' reference to

the problems between Godfrey and his father (which are highly indicative of a father's disapproval of his son's homosexuality; indeed, this comes up later in James' meeting with Godfrey's father, for Colonel Emsworth takes an instant disliking to James, his son's lover).

"...and also that his father and he did not always hit it off too well. The old man was sometimes a bully..."

Not that this stops James; indeed, he immediately sets out to Godfrey's family estate, where he spends the night in hopes of uncovering Godfrey's location. So consumed is James by Godfrey's welfare that he stands against the verbal assaults of Colonel Emsworth, refusing to back down despite the Colonel's threats:

"We had a bit of barney right away, and I should have walked back to the station if I had not felt that it might be playing his game for me to do so."

James even goes so far as to tell Colonel Emsworth:

"I was fond of your son Godfrey, sir. Many ties and memories united us."

The statement does not, of course, sit well with the Colonel, and yet this does nothing to dissuade James, James excusing his insolence by stating:

"You must put it down, sir, to my real love for your son."

Again and again we are given evidence to suggest that the relationship between Godfrey and James was that of lovers. We begin to see, then, that their tale was told because Watson dare not share the story belonging to him and Holmes. Indeed, we begin to see, too, the reasons for Watson choosing this story, for clearly it does not present any other points of interest; it is a story of love and friendship, having nothing to do with detection or deduction.

So far, however, we have only been graced with James' point of view. As the story progresses we begin to see that James' feelings for Godfrey are quite reciprocated. Indeed, in spending the night in Godfrey's family estate, James catches his first glimpse of Godfrey through the window, telling us:

"He was deadly pale — never have I seen a man so white. I reckon ghosts may look like that; but his eyes met mine, and they were the eyes of a living man. He sprang back when he saw that I was looking at him, and he vanished into the darkness."

That Godfrey would disobey his father, and risk public scandal by leaving his safe house, simply because he is overcome with desire to see James is quite suggestive.

In fact, later, Godfrey himself tells us:

"Old Ralph told me you [James] were there, and I couldn't help taking a peep at you."

A clear indication of Godfrey's need and love for James.

Prior to discovering Godfrey, however, James first sets out to search the grounds in hopes of finding his friend's hideaway. He stumbles across an old cottage, and, peering into the window, James tells us:

"However, I had little thought to spare upon such details, for a second man was seated with his back to the window, and I could swear that this second man was Godfrey. I could not see his face, but I knew the familiar slope of his shoulders."

To recognize a man by the slope of his shoulders is a true feat indeed. This speaks to intimacy beyond that of mere friends and comrades.

It is shortly after James' narrative that Holmes agrees to accompany James to Godfrey's family estate. There, our conviction that James and Godfrey are, in fact, lovers is strengthened.

"I cannot leave here," said my client firmly, "until I hear from Godfrey's own lips that he is under no restraint."

James' devotion becomes even more apparent when he risks everything to stand up to Godfrey's father. Finally, there is the eventual reunion between Godfrey and James, Holmes telling us:

A man was standing with his back to the fire, and at the sight of him my client sprang forward with outstretched hand.

"Why, Godfrey, old man, this is fine!"

We soon discover, however, that Godfrey is in quarantine with a suspected case of leprosy. His worry for James' safety becomes quite apparent, Godfrey crying:

"Don't touch me, Jimmie. Keep your distance."

Despite this, Godfrey does admit that he does not mind James seeing him in this state (and note the familiarity of 'Jimmie').

"That's why I don't court visitors," said he. "I don't mind you, Jimmie, but I could have done without your friend. I suppose there is some good reason for it, but you have me at a disadvantage."

James, we will see, despite Godfrey's leprosy, does not flinch from his friend; indeed, he stands quite true, his love and devotion proved beyond a shadow of a doubt. The story does, of course, end well for the lovers, for Holmes has brought with him a second opinion, and it is soon discovered that Godfrey does not, in fact, have leprosy, but rather, a rare and treatable, yet not contagious, skin condition.

It is this fact which draws the case to a close, but not before Holmes turns his

thoughts, once again, to Watson, Holmes stating:

And here it is that I miss my Watson. By cunning questions and ejaculations of wonder he could elevate my simple art, which is but systematized common sense, into a prodigy.

Bearing in mind our assumption that Watson is the true narrator of this story, the above statement becomes quite amusing, for while we can easily imagine Holmes (especially this late in their relationship) admitting to such a thing. The above statement is too well fitted to this story to have been taken out of context. We must therefore suggest that this statement did come from Holmes' pen, and that Holmes, in reading over Watson's manuscript, insisted upon its addition. We can well imagine, then, that Watson, upon reading Holmes' words, was moved to tears by Holmes' heartfelt confession.

Alternatively, it is entirely possible that Watson was merely extrapolating, perhaps from a conversation that ran thus:

"Ah, Watson, you should have been there. You would have made a fine case of it; by cunning questions and ejaculations of wonder you could have elevated what amounted to an elementary problem into a spectacular tale of interest and intrigue."

"I take it, Holmes, that you missed me."

"Hardly that, Watson. Hardly that."

And with his words, Holmes reached out his thin arm and drew me into the bedroom.

The Three Gables

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Three Gables* in May of 1903. There is no real evidence for this date, but there nothing to contradict it either. We will further examine the story's chronology throughout our analysis (as well as the story's canonicity). The story was first published in September of 1926.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes has just received a letter from a Mary Maberley, of Three Gables in Harrow Weald, requesting his aid in interpreting a matter of some confusion. Imagine his surprise, then, when he is visited by Steve Dixie, a ruffian who threatens Holmes' life should he get involved in the Harrow Weald affair. This peaks Holmes' interest, and he is soon able to deduce that Mrs. Maberley has something hidden within her house that someone is desperate to get a hold of. This fact is confirmed when Holmes, after a visit to a gossipmonger, returns to Three Gables to find that Mrs. Maberley has been chloroformed, her deceased son's belongings burgled. The story is quickly resolved, Holmes tracking down the woman responsible and uncovering a story of love, betrayal, and narrowly averted scandal.

The Subtext:

Before we begin with our analysis of the subtext contained within this story, it is first necessary to examine the canonicity of this case. Many scholars have expressed doubt as to this story's authenticity, and, indeed, in examining the story we find ample evidence to suggest the possibility of an imitation.

To begin with, the story itself is pretty outrageous. The story's villain, Isadora Klein, in an effort to retrieve a manuscript written by Mrs. Maberley's son (and hence avoid a scandal) goes so far as to offer to purchase Mrs. Maberley's home (along with its contents). When that doesn't work, she then proceeds to hire a gang of ruffians to break into Mrs. Maberley's home and retrieve the document. True, this does make for compelling fiction, but the sense of realism which accompanied so many of Holmes' previous cases is distinctly lacking.

Watson's style is also slightly off; at first glance it seems quite genuine, but then, as we

progress, it becomes quite obvious that the author is trying entirely too hard to write in the manner commonly used by Watson. The prose lacks Watson's natural grace.

Finally, and perhaps the most damning evidence of all, Sherlock Holmes is horribly out of character.

We shall begin with Holmes' treatment of Steve Dixie. Indeed, Holmes, largely due to his treatment of this character, has been labelled by some as a racist. This is quite unusual for Holmes, especially given his open-minded response to the events contained with *The Adventure of the Yellow Face* (which was published some 32 years earlier).

Then there are Holmes' forced attempts at humour; an act which seems incredibly out of place for the great detective. He is constantly joking and making barbs at the expense of others. Indeed, this is so unlike Holmes that he is barely recognizable.

In fact, most of Holmes' behaviour in this story is deplorable. At times he is downright annoying. He comes across as crude, rude and abrasive; so completely contrary to Holmes' usual self that one half expects to find a pod hidden in his wardrobe.

Finally, Holmes compounds a felony by allowing Klein to avoid punishment for her part in the burgling of Mrs. Maberley's home. This is not entirely new territory for Holmes, but it is the first time he has committed extortion --and this is particularly noteworthy when we consider that Holmes' sympathies did not rest with Klein.

This out of character behaviour on Holmes' behalf leads us, then, to a very poignant question:

Is *The Adventure of the Three Gables* a forgery?

This is by far the more popular theory, and yet, if this is the case, then we can completely ignore what little subtext is to be found within the tale. If this is not the case, then we must examine a possible alternative for Holmes' behaviour. Here, we feel, the answer is quite simple.

Sherlock Holmes is out of character, because Sherlock Holmes is high.

If we assume, then, that Holmes' unusual behaviour in this story can be chalked entirely up to his cocaine use, then we must dismiss Baring-Gould's date as wrong.

Recall that we have suggested that Holmes was finally able to wean himself from cocaine in 1897 (DEVI). In all likelihood this process began in 1896 (MISS), but it would take several years before Holmes could call himself clean.

Watson's confidence and competence in this tale are highly suggestive of a date post Holmes' return, so we can ignore anything before 1894. Further evidence for a later date is given in that Watson appears to be unmarried (although there is some debate as

to whether or not he is residing in Baker Street). Ignoring our first assumption, at the very least we can dismiss the years during Watson's marriage to Miss Morstan.

Combining the two, we can now safely date the case between 1894 and 1897. As Holmes' reaction to the cocaine seems particularly intense (hence his singular behaviour) we can also suggest that it has been some time since he last took the substance. This would favour a later date (i.e. 1897). In fact, it is entirely possible that the events contained within this story took place during one of Holmes' final relapses.

Assuming, then, that Holmes was indeed under the influence of cocaine, and that this relapse was one of his last (allowing for a later date) we are now in a position to examine the subtext contained within the story.

I had not seen Holmes for some days and had no idea of the new channel into which his activities had been directed.

So Watson begins his narrative, and it is this statement which has caused Baring-Gould to assume both a later date and a second (third) marriage. Here, however, we must suggest two potential alternatives. If indeed we do accept Baring-Gould's date (1903) then it is quite possible that Watson has merely returned from Sussex. If, however, we assume an earlier date (1897) then we must also suggest that Watson, frustrated with Holmes' continued drug use, has temporarily left Baker Street (though whether he obtained alternate lodgings, or simply checked into a hotel, we cannot say).

Watson's next statement, in addition to suggesting that Watson might have returned to Baker Street for good, can also be seen as evidence for our 'Holmes on a cocaine bender' theory.

He was in a chatty mood that morning, however, and had just settled me into the well-worn low armchair on one side of the fire, while he had curled down with his pipe in his mouth upon the opposite chair...

We must, of course, acknowledge Holmes' excitement at seeing Watson, as well as his desire to once again ensconce Watson in Baker Street (hence the settling of Watson into a well-worn armchair), but here we are particular to note Holmes' chattiness. Indeed, although Holmes is, on occasion, quite the stimulating conversationalist, this does seem rather out of place. We must then question what it was that prompted Holmes' sudden need to engage Watson in conversation. Clearly, the idea of a stimulant (such as cocaine) is not altogether implausible.

Alternatively, we might also suggest that Holmes was feeling particularly giddy (Watson having arrived home for a bout of morning sex) and that he, in his gratitude,

transferred Watson from the couch to his chair so that he might be comfortable. If this is the case, then we must acknowledge that Holmes is, on occasion, quite the considerate boyfriend.

Whatever the reason, their morning is soon interrupted by the arrival of Steve Dixie, a bruiser who takes little time in threatening Holmes with violence. Holmes seems completely unfazed by Dixie's threats, but Watson is clearly alarmed for Holmes' safety. He tells us:

...or it may have been the slight clatter which I made as I picked up the poker.

It is quite pleasing to note that, regardless of where they are in their relationship, Watson is still quite protective of his Holmes.

And Holmes is still quite observant (and appreciative) of his Watson, Holmes stating:

"I am glad you were not forced to break his woolly head, Watson. I observed your manoeuvres with the poker."

Dixie's visit, and his warning against Holmes' involvement in Harrow Weald, only serves to heighten Holmes' interest in the case. He and Watson soon head out to visit Mrs. Maberley, and it is there that Holmes first hears of her son's death.

Douglas Maberley is a celebrity of sorts, Holmes suggesting that all of London knows him (although Holmes admits to only knowing him second hand). It is curious, then, to note Holmes' comments regarding Maberley. Holmes tells us:

"What a magnificent creature he was!"

Going on to state:

"I have never known anyone so vitally alive. He lived intensely — every fibre of him!"

Here we must acknowledge that Holmes is suffering from a celebrity crush. One wonders what Watson made of Holmes' 'fanboy'-ish nature.

Deciding that Mrs. Maberley does not particularly want to hear his praise for her son, Holmes soon shifts gears, turning his attention to the case at hand. After hearing Mrs. Maberley's story, Holmes deduces that there is something in her house which is of great value. He then asks Watson's opinion on the matter, Watson agreeing wholeheartedly with Holmes' theory. Holmes' response, one must agree, is quite telling:

"Dr. Watson agrees, so that settles it."

We see here a measure of Holmes' trust and respect for Watson, that Watson's word could finalize a theory.

Shortly after suggesting that Mrs. Maberley have her lawyer spend the night, Holmes

and Watson part ways, Holmes heading out in search of Langdale Pike, the infamous London gossip, while Watson returns, presumably, to Baker Street. Watson is, however, quite careful to mention that he does not see Holmes for the rest of the *day*, implying that he does see him that night.

Still, Watson is careful, telling us:

When I met my friend in his room early next morning, I was conscious from his bearing that all was well, but none the less a most unpleasant surprise was awaiting us.

Note, however, that Watson does not refer to Holmes' rooms (which he would have done had he been living away from Baker Street). Watson distinctly refers to Holmes' room, which we all know at this point has been converted into storage. We must, however, give Watson points for trying.

From this point, the story quickly comes to a conclusion, Holmes moving on to investigate the burglary of Mrs. Mabberley's home, and then discovering the identity of the woman who orchestrated the entire thing. The story ends on an unusual note (although, not unusual for this particular story), with Holmes allowing the suspect to escape the clutches of the law. Not once does Holmes lead us through his process of deduction, and it is this, above all else, which has led many to question the authenticity of *Three Gables*. For our purposes, we must assume that Holmes, when under the influence of cocaine, is incapable of putting his process of deductive reasoning into words.

The Mazarin Stone

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone* in the summer of 1903. As only the season is given, dating the Mazarin Stone is a complicated matter. This is especially true when one considers the questions of canonicity that surround the story. We will examine both dates and the story's authenticity in our analysis. The story was first published in October of 1921.

Synopsis:

The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone is an adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Play, *The Crown Diamond*. Holmes, commissioned by some of the highest offices in England, sets the stage for the dramatic conclusion of his most recent case; the recovery of the Mazarin Stone, a priceless crown diamond. Written in the third person and containing only a brief appearance by Dr. Watson, *The Mazarin Stone* does not focus on the case itself, but rather on the stunning recovery of the jewel.

The Subtext:

In the entire Canon, no story has occasioned as much speculation (or, indeed, as much controversy) as *The Mazarin Stone*. An overwhelming majority of scholars dismiss this story as a forgery, and while its authorship remains in dispute, it is quite clear that we cannot assume MAZA's canonicity.

Indeed, it is your author's conviction that *The Mazarin Stone* is a fake. As such, the subtext contained within cannot be properly examined. In its place, then, we shall examine evidence which suggests that this story does not belong amongst Holmes' cases.

The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone contains several elements which have led scholars to question the story's authenticity. Here we shall examine each in turn, before turning to the question of authorship.

The dating in this story is quite inconsistent (and while Watson was famous for his random assignment of dates, this story goes above and beyond mere typos and misread notes).

By all accounts *The Mazarin Stone* should be placed in the later half of Canon (the

casual use of a gramophone and the presence of Holmes' wax bust assures us of this) and yet the presence of Billy the page makes this quite impossible. The reader will undoubtedly recall Billy's last appearance, which occurred in *The Valley of Fear*. As this case was set in 1888, Billy, who at best was ten, would now be twenty-five. Odd, is it not, that in MAZA Billy remains an unchanged child. This certainly gives new meaning to Watson's comment that Billy does not change.

There is, of course, another explanation; that the author was trying, desperately, to make this story as authentic as possible. There is a good deal of evidence to support this theory. The inclusion of Billy, then, can be seen as a mere attempt at duplicating Watson's earlier work.

In fact, we see this again in the description of Baker Street:

He looked round him at the scientific charts upon the wall, the acid-charred bench of chemicals, the violin-case leaning in the corner, the coal-scuttle, which contained of old the pipes and tobacco.

Surely at this point in Canon there is no need to describe Baker Street in such exacting detail. In fact, the entire sentence reeks of effort.

It is also quite unusual for Holmes' cases to present elements of familiarity, and yet, *The Mazarin Stone* does exactly that. A large portion of this story was borrowed from *The Adventure of the Empty House*. We know it unlikely that Holmes would have occasion to reuse his wax bust (which is oddly lacking in a bullet hole through its skull), but if he had then surely the events warranting its use would differ from EMPT. Holmes, fearful of air riffles for a second time, goes beyond mere coincidence; and here again we see evidence that MAZA is not an authentic story, the borrowed plot simply too convenient, the parallels between the Count (MAZA) and Moran (EMPT) almost laughable.

Holmes' role in the story, too, only serves to increase our doubt. *The Mazarin Stone* is not a tale of Holmes using his powers of observation and deduction. It is a story of Holmes outwitting two criminals. While we will concede that Holmes was, on occasion, exceedingly clever, Holmes' true gift was in the investigation, not the dramatic conclusion. MAZA gives us only the conclusion, suggesting that the story's author was unfamiliar with the Great Detective's true work.

As the story progresses, we discover that Holmes anticipates being murdered. In (we will admit) a very Holmes-like fashion, Holmes sends Watson away. There is some protest on Watson's behalf, but all too soon Watson agrees to take Holmes' note to

Scotland Yard, leaving Holmes in mortal danger. This is perhaps the biggest indication of this story's falsehood, for Watson would never leave Holmes to face danger alone. As wilful as we know Holmes to be, when it comes to Holmes' safety, Watson is by far the more stubborn man.

There are also layout problems with Baker Street. At one point, Holmes asks Billy to see the Count in their *waiting room*, and yet, never before has it been suggested that Baker Street even has a waiting room. The same can be said for Holmes' mysterious second bedroom door. The entire layout of Baker Street, then, has been changed to suit this story's plot. Had this story been authentic, this could not have happened.

Gone, too, are Lestrade and Gregson, replaced by *Youghal of the C.I.D.*. It should be noted that this is the first, and last, time we hear of Youghal (and the C.I.D.).

There are also questions surrounding the case's plausibility. In the final act, Holmes sneaks out from his bedroom and crosses across the sitting room to displace the wax dummy and sit in its place. Given previous accounts of Baker Street, this is absolutely impossible to accomplish without being seen. Even if Holmes banked on the Count's distraction, there is no possible way he would have taken so great a risk.

The gramophone, too, brings up several interesting questions. Holmes uses it to stage his violin playing, and yet, at that point in history, finding a recording with an unaccompanied violin would have been next to impossible. Surely Holmes did not expect the Count to believe he was playing an entire orchestra.

Finally, both Holmes and Watson are horribly clichéd. At one point the author tells us:

Holmes seldom laughed, but he got as near it as his old friend Watson could remember.

We have long since dismissed this claim (in fact, at one point Holmes dances and laughs and wrings Watson's hand --HOUN) and so we must question why it is that, in this story, of all stories, Holmes is known to seldom laugh. Clearly this story was written by one who did not know Holmes well.

We have shown, then, that this story was not written by Watson. We can safely assume that it was not written by Holmes (surely Holmes would have focused on the process of observation and deduction which led him to uncover the Count's identity). Who, then, did write this story?

We know that *The Mazarin Stone* is an adaptation of a play written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Could it be that Doyle (who had been acting as a literary agent for Watson for some time) wrote this tale? Perhaps Watson (who was now busy with domestic

life in Sussex) was unable to meet his publisher's deadline. Perhaps it was he, then, who requested Doyle's aid (recalling, of course, Doyle's successful play).

This is certainly the most popular theory, and yet others have suggested a variety of authors, ranging from Watson's wife, to Mrs. Hudson, to Billy the Page, to Inspector Lestrade.

Perhaps the most interesting theory of all (and it should be noted that it is by far the least popular theory) is that the entire Casebook of Sherlock Holmes is a forgery. Scholars have speculated that the Casebook was written by an anonymous third party who had access to Watson's notes. There has been some speculation that Watson, at this point, had died prematurely, leaving Holmes alone with his bees. While this explanation would certainly explain the inconsistencies in the Casebook, it is still your author's conviction that Watson was alive and well, and that he simply lacked the time to meet a contracted deadline, hence requiring him to seek out Doyle's aid in throwing together a hastily constructed story.

The Creeping Man

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Creeping Man* in September of 1903. In addition to being the exact date Watson gives us, Watson also tells us that this case was one of the last prior to Holmes' retirement. The story was first published in March of 1923.

Synopsis:

Mr. Trevor Bennett seeks Holmes' aid in uncovering the reasons behind his employer's singular behaviour. Not only has Professor Presbury's moods been volatile, but, after disappearing for several weeks, the Professor returned a somewhat changed man. He has become furtive and sly, and has taken to engaging in unusual behaviour (such as crawling about on his hands and feet). Then, of course, there is the matter of Presbury's long-time canine companion, who has suddenly turned violent towards his master. Bennett knows the matter has something to do with the strangely marked packages the Professor has been receiving, but aside from that (and a lingering sensation of unease) he is at a loss to explain Professor Presbury's recent transformation. It does not take Holmes long to connect the curious behaviour of Presbury's dog to the truth of the matter, and, after a trip to Camford, Holmes is quickly able to deduce that the Professor is under the influence of some drug; though Holmes himself will be surprised by the final solution.

The Subtext:

It was one Sunday evening early in September of the year 1903 that I received one of Holmes's laconic messages.

So begins Watson's narrative, and we see here that Watson is now residing completely in Sussex. While Holmes will soon join him, we see that he is not quite ready to make the transition; nor is he ready to work without Watson's aid. It is interesting to note that, despite Watson's hectic schedule, Watson does drop everything so that he might aid Holmes in this, Holmes' final endeavour.

The relations between us in those latter days were peculiar. He was a man of habits, narrow and concentrated habits, and I had become one of them.

The above statement has occasioned a good deal of comment (including the theory that Watson had become resigned in their later years) and yet here we see nothing more than the evolution of a relationship. What husband has not thought of his wife as a habit; what wife her husband? The thrill and excitement of newfound love soon gives way to comfort and habit. We see here, then, evidence of a long-term relationship. Holmes and Watson, fast approaching their shared retirement, are now officially an old, married couple.

That is not to say that their relationship was without excitement. Indeed, Watson tells us:

I was a whetstone for his mind. I stimulated him. He liked to think aloud in my presence. His remarks could hardly be said to be made to me — many of them would have been as appropriately addressed to his bedstead...

While we have no doubt that Watson did, indeed, stimulate Holmes, here we are more interested in the apparent openness of their relationship. Truly the cornerstone of a good relationship is communication, and we see here exactly that; Holmes, comfortable in Watson's presence, has finally cast aside his barriers and now shares the whole of his soul with his long-time friend and companion.

It should, however, be noted that scholars (rightly, of course) have commented on Watson's tone in the above passages. Watson seems quite resigned, Holmes seemingly taking Watson for granted. While there is likely some truth in this statement (and what couple is without their problems?) we see this more of an attempt on Watson's behalf to downplay their relationship. If this is the case, then the above comments are truly fascinating, for despite his attempts to deceive the public, Watson still manages to cast himself into the role of Holmes' spouse.

Then with a start he seemed to come from his reverie, and with his usual whimsical smile he greeted me back to what had once been my home.

And absent spouse, to be sure, as we now know that Watson now considers Sussex his home. As we continue with our analysis, we shall soon see that Watson, having successfully made the transition to Sussex, is now bent on Holmes returning with him. In fact, it is quite likely that Watson gave Holmes a firm deadline. When one considers that *The Creeping Man* is Holmes' last 'official' case, this theory becomes quite probable.

Indeed, within moments we see that Watson is quite ensconced in their new Sussex villa.

I sank back in my chair in some disappointment. Was it for so trivial a question as this that I had been summoned from my work?

One can almost hear Watson's protests at Holmes having taken on yet another case.

But, Holmes; you did promise. Plus, your bees arrived yesterday, and I haven't the faintest clue what to do with them.

Holmes does not, of course, pay Watson's protests any mind. In fact, he launches full into the case, their morning soon interrupted by the arrival of their client (and later, his fiancée).

"Mr. Holmes, this is the young lady I spoke of. This is my fiancée."

"We were gradually coming to that conclusion, were we not, Watson?" Holmes answered with a smile.

Amusing, is it not, that both Holmes and Watson recognize the lady's role long before her introduction. Clearly Holmes and Watson are more than capable of spotting love. Undoubtedly Holmes recognized the same light in Miss Presbury's eyes that he saw so often reflected in Watson's.

It is here that Miss Presbury and Mr. Bennett tell their strange tale regarding the singular behaviour of Miss Presbury's father. Holmes agrees to look into the case, and a few days later Holmes and Watson head out to Camford so that they might meet the man himself. Watson tells us:

Monday morning found us on our way to the famous university town — an easy effort on the part of Holmes, who had no roots to pull up, but one which involved frantic planning and hurrying on my part, as my practice was by this time not inconsiderable.

Here we address another of Baring-Gould's theories; that of Watson's third wife. Your author has suggested that Watson has merely taken on a practice in Sussex, and so the above statement would confirm. Note that Watson makes no mention of a wife. Truly, if Watson were married, he would have spared some consideration to his wife. As it is, Watson cares only for his practice, suggesting that, if there was a wife, she was hardly a matter of importance. As Watson is not known for his cruelty, we must therefore discount Baring-Gould's suggestion of a second (or third) wife.

We do not, of course, doubt Watson's statement that his practice is not inconsiderable. There is ample evidence to suggest that Watson's Sussex practice is thriving, and that Watson is, in fact, in Sussex. Note, for example, Holmes' comment:

"Excellent, Watson! Compound of the Busy Bee and Excelsior.

The above is said by Holmes, in response to Watson's statement that they can but try in their efforts to deceive Professor Presbury. Curious, is it not, that Holmes should make such a statement. Clearly, in addition to Watson's practice, Watson has also taken to keeping Holmes' bees.

We must note, too, that Holmes has obviously been forced to seek outside aid (Watson's practice often keeping him from assisting Holmes on his cases).

"Mercer is since your time," said Holmes. "He is my general utility man who looks up routine business."

While we have been introduced to Holmes' assistants in the past, one would imagine that, were Watson available, Holmes would have sent Watson in Mercer's place. It is quite obvious, then, that Watson has established a foundation in Sussex.

Returning to the case at hand, Holmes and Watson's trip to the famous university town does not yield the results Holmes was looking for. It is shortly after their brief (and near disastrous) interview with Professor Presbury that Watson tells us:

We were, I may say, seated in the old sitting-room of the ancient hotel, with a bottle of the famous vintage of which Holmes had spoken on the table between us.

It is quite heart-warming to note that, despite the passage of years, Holmes and Watson are still capable of sneaking in the odd romantic moment.

All too soon, however, Watson is leaving, returning to Sussex and his practice, until next Holmes beckons Watson to his side:

I saw nothing of my friend for the next few days, but on the following Monday evening I had a short note asking me to meet him next day at the train.

Above we mentioned the probability of Watson setting a deadline for Holmes' retirement. Undoubtedly he had grown frustrated waiting for Holmes to leave Baker Street of his own accord, and so dictated exactly when he expected Holmes to vacate Baker Street and join him in Sussex. Holmes, as this story progresses, seems to accept this, at one point stating:

"It's surely time that I disappeared into that little farm of my dreams."

We must also acknowledge how absolutely endearing it is that Holmes should spend his nights dreaming of Watson.

From here the story comes quickly to a close, Holmes finally discovering that Professor Presbury has been injecting himself with the serum of a Langur monkey in hopes of restoring his youth and vitality. This is quite the interesting theme, and will factor in quite strongly when we examine the story's canonicity.

Several scholars have questioned the authenticity of *The Creeping Man*, suggesting that it is entirely too fantastical for one of Holmes' tales. Here, we suggest that the events contained within this tale did, in fact, occur, but that the solution has been altered.

The underlying theme (that of an aging man attempting to cling to his vanished youth) was, in fact, meant as a comment on Holmes' reluctance to retire. This story, then, is in fact Holmes' story. Presbury's attack and mutilation at the hands of his dog was meant to signify Holmes' eventual realization that he had come to the end of his career. It is not mere coincidence that this tale (above all others) should conclude Holmes' career. Indeed, when next we meet Holmes, he will be happily living out his retirement in Sussex. Like the Professor, Holmes has apparently learned the folly of trying to defy his age.

The Lion's Mane

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates *The Adventure of the Lion's Mane* in August of 1909. Holmes tells us that the story begins in the early part of July, 1907. Aside from Baring-Gould's meteorological evidence (which is the basis for his year), we have no reason to reject Holmes' date. The story was first published in November of 1926.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes, now retired and living in Sussex, finds himself once again in the midst of an investigation when Fitzroy McPherson, the science master from the nearby preparatory school, The Gables, is seemingly murdered. Holmes is there to witness his death, the man staggering up from the beach before succumbing to obvious pain, his body covered in red welts, his final words a reference to the lion's mane. Holmes' investigation turns up no end of suspects, but, for the life of him, he cannot put the facts together in order to form a case. All of that changes, however, when McPherson's dog is discovered dead; having died in the same manner as his master. McPherson's reference to the lion's mane comes back to Holmes then, and Holmes, relying on his collection of obscure knowledge, is soon able to put a name to the killer; though not before Ian Murdoch, the school's mathematics master and one of Holmes' original suspects, falls victim to the same creature that cost McPherson his life.

The Subtext:

Before we begin with our examination of the story itself, we must first examine the question of authorship. The reader will undoubtedly recall our analysis of *The Blanched Soldier*, where we discounted Holmes as the author and suggested instead that it was, in fact, Watson who authored the story. Here we must examine the same issue, for again we are presented with a story narrated by Holmes.

Like *The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*, Holmes appearing as the narrator (and seeming author) has led to much speculation. It should be noted, however, that, unlike *BLAN*, the story's style is far more in keeping with what we would expect from Sherlock Holmes. There is a sense of bluntness in Holmes' words that is far more suited to his personality than to Watson's. The short, precise style, combined with an elaborate

focus on the process of deduction, has led numerous scholars to agree that Holmes was, in fact, the author. For ourselves, we suspect a collaboration; with Holmes writing the bulk of the tale and Watson editing it to make it suitable for mass publication. This would certainly explain Holmes' seemingly uncharacteristic lapses into romantic, verbose prose.

For those scholars who reject Holmes' claim of authorship, it is interesting to note that several theories surrounding this story's authenticity have also arisen. Given the nature of the story, it is entirely possible that Watson wrote the tale in order to conceal some element of Holmes' retired life. Indeed, it has even been purported that Watson wrote *The Lion's Mane* in order to distract attention from Holmes' counter-espionage services, which began long before the events contained within *His Last Bow* (Holmes having retired before the age of fifty has often led to speculation that he had not, in fact, retired at all). Relations between England and Germany were quite strained, after all, even as early as 1904, and so, who better to combat the sudden rise in foreign operatives than Sherlock Holmes.

Alternatively, the student of subtext can also suggest that *LION* was written as a further attempt to conceal Holmes and Watson's decidedly intimate relationship.

Returning now to the story at hand (and, more importantly, the subtext contained within) our first order of business is to answer the question: Where is Watson?

Recall that Holmes appears alone in the story, telling us:

At this period of my life the good Watson had passed almost beyond my ken. An occasional weekend visit was the most that I ever saw of him.

The above statement has been given as evidence in favour of Watson's second (third) marriage, several scholars suggesting that Watson's newest wife was not as lax as Mary when it came to Watson's involvement with Holmes. It has also been suggested that Holmes and Watson, without the commonality of their work, had drifted apart.

We, of course, must dismiss both of these claims. We have disputed the presence of a second (third) wife in our analysis of *BLAN*, and we can safely state that Watson has not tired of Holmes (for why else would he continue, even beyond this date, to publish Holmes' cases?). Indeed, all other evidence would suggest that Holmes and Watson remained quite close throughout Holmes' retirement. The reader will also undoubtedly recall our suggestion that Watson is, in fact, living with Holmes in Sussex.

So why, then, is Holmes working without his Watson? The answer, quite simply, is thus:

He's not.

Recall that Holmes tells us:

It occurred after my withdrawal to my little Sussex home, when I had given myself up entirely to that soothing life of Nature for which I had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the gloom of London.

We know Holmes has for some time desired to live a life of natural solitude, and yet, to say that Holmes has been yearning for long years a change of scenery is quite preposterous. Surely this is not the same man that Watson once described with the following paragraph:

He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of nature found no place among his many gifts, and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country. [CARD]

If the above statement, then, does not belong to Holmes, then we must suggest that it belongs to the narrator. We have speculated that the writing of this story was done in collaboration, and so we must now speculate that the above passage belongs, not to Holmes, but to Watson. If this is the case, then Watson is clearly still living in Sussex, and, what's more, he must also have been present during this investigation.

With this in mind, we can now safely say that Holmes' comments on Watson passing beyond his ken are nothing more than a blind.

Indeed, we are soon given further evidence to suggest exactly this, for Holmes tells us:

My house is lonely. I, my old housekeeper, and my bees have the estate all to ourselves.

While several scholars have suggested that Holmes was referring to Mrs. Hudson in his reference to an old housekeeper, here we must dismiss this claim. Why would Mrs. Hudson sell Baker Street and move with Holmes to Sussex in order to continue to serve him when by all accounts Holmes' princely rental payments have made her a rich woman? Surely her loyalty to Holmes did not stretch that far.

If Holmes' *old housekeeper*, then, is not Mrs. Hudson, who is he or she? Let us examine the word housekeeper. Webster's offers two definitions for housekeeper, the first being an individual paid to keep house, the second, simply, a housewife. If, then, we replace the term housekeeper with housewife, and the term housewife with wife, and the term wife with spouse, then clearly we see that Holmes' reference to a housekeeper

is in fact a veiled reference to Dr. Watson.

Returning now to the story, we are soon introduced to Harold Stackhurst, Holmes' only apparent friend. Holmes tells us:

He [Stackhurst] and I were always friendly from the day I came to the coast, and he was the one man who was on such terms with me that we could drop in on each other in the evenings without an invitation.

This is quite interesting for a man who, save Watson, had no friends. Here we must speculate on several theories regarding Stackhurst's existence, and his friendship with Holmes.

To begin, it is entirely possible that Holmes' account is accurate; that Stackhurst is, in fact, a mere friend. Alternatively, one might also suppose that Stackhurst had become Holmes' lover in his later years. If Watson truly did remarry, then it is quite possible that Holmes broke off their intimacy and, as a more confident, well adjusted person (in his later years) Holmes sought out a new and less complicated relationship. It should be noted that this theory does not fit with the facts we have gathered so far.

It is also quite possible that Holmes and Watson were both able to name Stackhurst a friend (and if this is the case then we have no doubt that it was Watson who initiated this friendship and later introduced Holmes to Stackhurst).

Finally, there is also a distinct possibility that Stackhurst is a figment of Watson's imagination. Not wanting to include himself in the story, Watson might very well have created an original character, through which Watson could tell his own story. This theory makes a good deal of sense, for Watson has long been trying to convince his public that he was in London while Holmes was in Sussex.

While it is your author's opinion that the third option is the more likely, here we wish to examine the second option; that Holmes and Watson both claimed Stackhurst's friendship. It is here that we deviate from the story itself and examine the seeming triangle between Stackhurst, McPherson, and Murdock.

Indeed, there is some indication that Stackhurst was slightly closer to McPherson than a mere friendship would warrant. This becomes quite obvious when we examine Stackhurst's reaction to McPherson's death. Holmes tells us:

...while Stackhurst, dazed at this tragedy, remained by the body.

Stackhurst spends most of Holmes' investigation dazed and horrified by McPherson's death, but we are given a clear indication of just how deep this tragedy has touched him when he later accompanies Holmes to interview McPherson's fiancée. Holmes

tells us:

Stackhurst's nerves were near the surface after all he had endured.

Stackhurst, however, appears to have had some competition for McPherson's attention (aside from McPherson's fiancée that is), for upon meeting Murdock, Murdock states:

"I had intended to do so. I have lost today the only person who made The Gables habitable."

We later learn that Murdock claimed McPherson as his closest, and only, friend.

This is, of course, mere speculation, for the story neither confirms nor desires any interest between Stackhurst and McPherson, or Murdock and McPherson. It is, however, interesting to speculate, for one can only imagine the sense of peace and belonging Holmes and Watson must have felt upon meeting a like-minded couple.

We return now to Holmes and Watson, and the conclusion of the story. As Holmes discovers the truth behind McPherson's death (and the jellyfish responsible for it), he confirms an aspect of his personality that we, as both readers and students of subtext, have long suspected:

Women have seldom been an attraction to me.

Here we cannot help but note that Holmes remains silent on the topic of men.

His Last Bow

Dates:

Baring-Gould dates His Last Bow in August of 1914, and as the narrator twice mentions this date, telling us that it is the most terrible August in the history of the world (a reference to the start of the First World War) we have no reason to question Baring-Gould's date. The story was first published in September of 1917.

Synopsis:

Sherlock Holmes, in his final act, sets himself against the brilliant German operative, Von Bork, in a battle that will ultimately determine the fate of England at the start of the First World War. Having disguised himself as an Irish-American informant named Altamont, Holmes has spent two years infiltrating Von Bork's organization, his investigation coming to a close in this dramatic conclusion. Through cunning wit and industrious cleverness, Holmes has systematically destroyed Von Bork's life's work and is now ready to conclude the case with Von Bork's arrest. A patriotic piece, His Last Bow is surely an example of Holmes' finest hour.

The Subtext:

Much like LION, His Last Bow has occasioned a good deal of speculation regarding the authorship of this story. As the tale is told in the third person, and Holmes and Watson do not appear until the latter half of the story, it is highly unlikely that either of them penned the original tale. This has, of course, led to numerous theories regarding who did.

There is, of course, the distinct possibility that this story is a forgery. It should be noted, however, that this theory is quite unpopular (largely due to LAST's date of publication, which occurred well before The Casebook was written --most scholars limit speculation regarding canonicity to the stories contained within The Casebook).

Several scholars have suggested that it was Holmes' brother, Mycroft, who wrote the first half of the story (indeed, some have speculated that Baron Von Herling was, in fact, Mycroft in disguise). If this is the case, then we can easily see collaboration between Holmes, Watson and Mycroft, with Mycroft and Holmes dictating to Watson and Watson using the third person for purely logistical purposes (and, indeed, your

author is quite fond of this theory).

Others have suggested Martha (who many believe to be Mrs. Hudson), as she was present throughout both Von Bork and Von Herling's interview, and Holmes and Watson's arrival.

Assuming, then, that this story is authentic, and that multiple parties were involved in the writing of this story, we are now in a better position to examine the subtext contained within.

A passenger sprang out of it and advanced swiftly towards him, while the chauffeur, a heavily built, elderly man with a gray moustache, settled down like one who resigns himself to a long vigil.

The above sentence is our first introduction to Holmes and Watson (although we do not yet know this fact), and here we cannot help but note that in 1914, some thirty-three years after their first meeting, Holmes and Watson are still very much together. We will examine this as the story continues, for we will soon learn that their peaceful retirement did proceed uninterrupted.

Holmes quickly concludes his business with Von Bork, and it is after, Von Bork unconscious on the sofa, that Holmes and Watson are finally free to put aside the case and enjoy one another's company.

"Another glass, Watson!" said Mr. Sherlock Holmes as he extended the bottle of Imperial Tokay.

The thickset chauffeur, who had seated himself by the table, pushed forward his glass with some eagerness.

"It is a good wine, Holmes."

"A remarkable wine, Watson."

We soon learn that for the past two years Holmes has been out of contact; operating under cover in the service of King and Country. And yet, despite this their interaction is still quite informal. It is obvious here that, even with the passage of time, Holmes and Watson remain very much a couple.

Holmes soon reveals that it has, indeed, been two years since last he saw Watson. We learn that this was quite necessary; that Holmes could not have carved out an alias had he not gone underground. We have no doubt that, while perhaps a little chagrin at the news, Watson was more than willing to allow Holmes to get involved. Watson is an old campaigner, and very loyal to King and Country. He knew well the value and importance of Holmes' mission; knew, too, that Holmes was likely the only man in England

capable of saving England, and while we are certain that he mourned losing Holmes for an undetermined length of time (and Watson could not have known the affair would last two years) we are equally certain that, whenever he thought of Holmes, immersed in the affairs of politics, he was overcome with the fiercest sense of pride.

Their reunion in this story, then, is quite touching. Indeed, Holmes is so overcome with joy at seeing Watson that he forgets where he is and allows himself the luxury of touching:

But you, Watson"--he stopped his work and took his old friend by the shoulders--"I've hardly seen you in the light yet. How have the years used you? You look the same blithe boy as ever."

We cannot, of course, neglect to point out Holmes' comment that Watson, despite being well into his sixties, appears the same blithe boy as ever. One would think both men had long since past their prime. Perhaps Holmes was feeling nostalgic.

Watson's response, of course, is also quite telling, for he freely admits:

"I feel twenty years younger, Holmes. I have seldom felt so happy as when I got your wire asking me to meet you at Harwich with the car."

After two years with only the occasional reassurance that Holmes was alive and well (and we know Holmes would have cut off all contact during this time; Holmes does, after all, take his work quite seriously), to finally hear from Holmes; Watson must have been ecstatic. Note, too, Watson's reference to *the* car, implying that the car belongs equally to Holmes (for surely if the car belonged solely to Watson, he would have stated *my* car). Again we are given evidence that Holmes and Watson are, in fact, living together in Sussex.

Above we theorized upon both Holmes and Watson's loyalty to their Country --a loyalty so strong that Holmes did not hesitate in taking on this assignment, nor did Watson hesitate in allowing Holmes to go. We see confirmation for this theory in Holmes' next comment, for he tells Watson:

"These are the sacrifices one makes for one's country, Watson."

And truly a two year separation is a great sacrifice to make.

Despite the passage of these years, Watson is still quite clever to conceal the details of Holmes' investigation. In fact, he questions:

"But you have retired, Holmes. We heard of you as living the life of a hermit among your bees and your books in a small farm upon the South Downs."

This is an obvious attempt to distance himself from Sussex, likely made in hopes of

convincing his public that Holmes had retired alone. Their conversation here is far too awkward to have actually occurred, and so we must dismiss the above, and Holmes' response:

"Exactly, Watson. Here is the fruit of my leisured ease, the magnum opus of my latter years!" He picked up the volume from the table and read out the whole title, Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen. "Alone I did it. Behold the fruit of pensive nights and laborious days when I watched the little working gangs as once I watched the criminal world of London."

In short, their entire conversation here can be seen as plot exposition. Watson, of course, knew that Holmes had retired, and that he had come out of retirement. He knew, too, that Holmes had completed his bee work, and that he had published his magnum opus (indeed, Watson likely proofed the work) and yet, he could not allow this information to surface. Indeed, the inclusion of this conversation can also be seen as proof of Watson's involvement in the writing of this story, for Watson often included pieces of dialogue that were either out of place, or invented entirely, all in an effort to make clear what, to the public, would otherwise be unclear. This is the mark of a man with writing experience.

We must turn now, for a moment, away from this story and examine the stories contained within *The Casebook*. The reader will undoubtedly recall several of Watson's opening paragraphs, with references to Holmes' activities in his declining years. Indeed, twelve stories were published after the publication of *His Last Bow*, and many of those include references to the present condition of Holmes and Watson's relationship. We know, then, that both Holmes and Watson will survive the First World War.

That being said, *His Last Bow* ends on a rather uncertain note. The story ends, literally, on the eve of the First World War, and so we see in both Holmes and Watson an impending sense of doom. This is important to note, for although we know the final outcome, Holmes and Watson did not, and so Holmes' request:

"As to you, Watson, you are joining us with your old service, as I understand, so London won't be out of your way. Stand with me here upon the terrace, for it may be the last quiet talk that we shall ever have."

Takes on new meaning. Here we foresee a bleak and desolate end; the reader expecting Holmes and Watson to go their separate ways, Holmes returning to his counter-espionage services, Watson volunteering for duty, all in the name of protecting England from the coming storm.

Naturally, then, their first instinct is to ignore their prisoner (who still remains in the back of Watson's car) and engage in idle chit-chat. In fact, we are told:

The two friends chatted in intimate converse for a few minutes, recalling once again the days of the past...

We can well imagine the sense of nostalgia that this conversation brought up, and that, combined with the desperateness of the situation, likely led to other, more tangible conversations. Indeed, it would not be entirely unsurprising to discover that Holmes and Watson stood on that terrace for several long minutes, locked, once again, in one another's embrace.

When finally they part, Holmes' thoughts turn to philosophy, Holmes stating:

"Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age. There's an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it's God's own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared."

One wonders, then, how long it was before Holmes and Watson were finally able to return, once again, to their Sussex home; Holmes to his bees, Watson to his practice, and them to each other.

Appendix I: Abbreviations

Story abbreviations used throughout *Decoding the Subtext* are the standard abbreviations used through Sherlockian scholarship. They were first devised by Jay Finley Christ and are as follows:

ABBE	The Adventure of the Abbey Grange
BERY	The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet
BLAC	The Adventure of Black Peter
BLAN	The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier
BLUE	The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle
BOSC	The Boscombe Valley Mystery
BRUC	The Adventure of Bruce-Partington Plans
CARD	The Adventure of the Cardboard Box
CHAS	The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton
COPP	The Adventure of the Copper Beeches
CREE	The Adventure of the Creeping Man
CROO	The Crooked Man
DANC	The Adventure of the Dancing Men
DEVI	The Adventure of the Devil's Foot
DYIN	The Adventure of the Dying Detective
EMPT	The Adventure of the Empty House
ENGR	The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb
FINA	The Final Problem
FIVE	The Five Orange Pips
GLOR	The "Gloria Scott"
GOLD	The Adventure of the Golden Pince Nez
GREE	The Greek Interpreter
HOUN	The Hound of the Baskervilles
IDEN	A Case of Identity
ILLU	The Adventure of the Illustrious Client
LADY	The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax
LAST	His Last Bow
LION	The Adventure of the Lion's Mane
MAZA	The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone
MISS	The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter
MUSG	The Musgrave Ritual
NAVA	The Naval Treaty
NOBL	The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor

NORW	The Adventure of the Norwood Builder
PRIO	The Adventure of the Priory School
REDC	The Adventure of the Red Circle
REDH	The Red-Headed League
REIG	The Reigate Squires
RESI	The Resident Patient
RETI	The Adventure of the Retired Colourman
SCAN	A Scandal in Bohemia
SECO	The Adventure of the Second Stain
SHOS	The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place
SIGN	The Sign of Four
SILV	Silver Blaze
SIXN	The Adventure of the Six Napoleons
SOLI	The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist
SPEC	The Adventure of the Speckled Band
STOC	The Stockbroker's Clerk
STUD	A Study in Scarlet
SUSS	The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire
THOR	The Problem of Thor Bridge
3GAB	The Adventure of the Three Gables
3GAR	The Adventure of the Three Garridebs
3STU	The Adventure of the Three Students
TWIS	The Man with the Twisted Lip
VALL	The Valley of Fear
VEIL	The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger
WIST	The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge
YELL	The Yellow Face