Author's note: This is very much a work in progress...an early draft. I intend to continue work on it shortly to both improve and expand it, and would very much appreciate your comments.

–Rod Mollise

The Erotic Hound: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles as a Text of Pleasure

"Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!"

Gigantic the hound may be, and deep are his paw prints across the landscape of the mystery genre, but is he pleasurable? Is The Hound of the Baskervilles worthy of serious critical attention? There is no questioning that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's detective novel is and has been gigantically popular since it was first published in The Strand Magazine in 1901 and 1902. Does this immense following necessarily make the text of Doyle's novel "pleasurable" as defined in the discourse of Roland Barthes, though?

Before undertaking an examination of the Hound in the context of Barthes' seminal The Pleasure of the Text, it might be wise to recall just how popular, how enormous Doyle's novel-hound has been. At least 50,000 copies were sold soon after its initial publication in book form, and uncounted millions more have undoubtedly made their way into the hands of the reading public over the intervening century (the novel, still in print, of course, is available in at least 50 languages). Popularity

may nor may not be a good indicator of potential for pleasure within a text, but it is an obvious indication that something importantly appealing to the reader is going on.

There are many devotees of the other three Sherlock Holmes novels and the fifty-six short stories, but the number of these readers is dwarfed by the number of those whose only knowledge of the scientific detective and his faithful Boswell comes from The Hound of the Baskervilles (HOUN). Our collective memory of the Holmes and Watson in this particular case, stalking their hellhound across the foggy Devonshire moors, seems endlessly appealing, and the image of Holmes in his deerstalker cap accompanied by faithful Doctor Watson with his drawn Webley and Scott service revolver has penetrated deeply into our culture (the number of television, radio, and print advertisements that have used this baroque image of Holmes to sell everything from tobacco to toothpaste must number in the thousands). While this romantic vision has come to symbolize Sherlock Holmes and, in fact, his Victorian age, in the public imagination, this cherished picture of Holmes is actually atypical of the “real” detective.

When the Holmes stories are examined closely, it becomes clear that this popular imagining of Holmes as a gothic monster hunter, another Van Helsing, is at odds with the man revealed in the “canon” (as the Doyle stories and novels are called by their fans, the “Sherlockians”). Rather than being a rustic hound on the scent of a hound, the Sherlock Holmes of Doyle’s Creation is

a gentleman, completely wedded to the great city of London, and more at home in evening dress than in Inverness and deerstalker.

The real Sherlock Holmes is somewhat elusive and his world, one of cocaine needles and sexual intrigues (by those around him if not him), is, again, quite different from the cozy Victorian sitting room milieu most of us “remember” as the other happy feature of the tales. Like the moor, the oe’rweening London charm has more to do with Hollywood than Doyle (coziness is a real aspect of the stories, certainly, but never their main or only aspect). Unlike the movies, acceptable as some may have been, Conan Doyle’s edgier Holmes-world, the world of the books, is a powerful thing when it comes to the production of pleasure.

Hollywood Holmes? The throng of people who’ve actually read The Hound of the Baskervilles is augmented by legions who’ve never read the novel, but have seen one of its many film adaptations/mutations. Curiously, I find that quite a few people who “remember” reading the novel, when closely questioned, turn out to have “only” seen one of the films. This is not overly surprising given the ubiquity of the Hound in the cinema. Sherlock Holmes is the most filmed fictional character (at least 211 Sherlock Holmes films have been made, including numerous silents), and HOUN has been translated to screen more than any of the other tales.

These filmic hounds (19 at last count), which range in quality from Fox’s serviceable Basil Rathbone – Nigel Bruce 1939 outing to the surprisingly poor Hound Granada Television brought forth in 1988 for the otherwise excellent Jerermy Brett Sherlock

Holmes series, supplement but do not overshadow the novel, which stands alone in quality and continues to be reprinted year after year (especially now that it has fallen into the public domain). The Hound of the Baskervilles films can be entertaining, but not one has captured the sharp edges and the hidden fissures lurking in the book. The movies tend to reduce HOUN to a juvenile tale of good versus evil (Holmes was never about good versus evil, not completely) on the foggy moor.

Despite the novel's continuing popularity—or, perhaps because of it--critical opinion on The Hound of the Baskervilles was mixed, at best, for many years, and tended to place the novel within the huge wave of popular literature that crested in the late 19th century. In fact, a possibly apocryphal story insists that HOUN's original publisher, McClure, Phillips & Co, ran advertisements shortly after the book's publication "admitting" that The Hound of the Baskervilles was not exactly a landmark in English literature, and that it was no challenge to Dickens and Thackeray. Fun, yes, literature, no.

True or not, this sums up the novel's initial and ongoing critical reception: sure, the Hound was and is popular, and if it is admittedly just an artifact of popular literature, it is at least a good one—as light entertainment goes. Yes, it is a notable example of the popular novels westerners were reading in the late 19th century, and, while it is a cut or two above the penny dreadfuls, it really doesn't have much to recommend it beyond its cracking good story. It certainly does little to illuminate England's fin de siecle culture as the stately liner

that was the British Empire began to list. As a novel, it is also rather artless.

As recently as twenty years ago, a serious examination of any of Doyle's work (and especially the Holmes tales) would have seemed slightly ridiculous. It was, like Dracula, simply too popular. Perhaps also a bit too overheated. Like Dracula, HOUN radiates a certain and strange sexual wavelength and illogic that seems as off-putting (consciously, at least) as Varney the Vampire.

Is Hound really a bad book? Does it answer nothing? Specifically, does HOUN have nothing to say about the twilight of the Empire? Hardly. Even a cursory reading the novel will show the error this critical opinion. The Hound of the Baskervilles is in some ways a better example of gothic fin de siecle literature than it is of the "modern," scientific detective story. As we shall see, Holmes' logic and deductive skills are very creaky in HOUN. They are, to be honest, overwhelmed by the novel's sense of gloom, decay, and entropy. The Baskerville heir, the weak Sir Henry, is every bit as much an example of devolution as Henry Jekyll.

It seems erroneous, to call HOUN a detective novel. A "mystery" novel, perhaps. Certainly the detection part of HOUN is of comparatively little interest and, in fact, seems rather peremptory compared to the violent sexual struggles that engulf the characters, and the overriding sense of hopeless that settles over all, that fin de siecle premonition that things will never get any better and are only destined to become worse.

Yes, Holmes seems to solve some sort of mystery at the end of HOUN. The spectral canine appears to be exorcised at the end of the book, but there is no happiness for the characters. Things are worse, incalculably worse, than they were when the novel began (if it truly has a beginning). At the nominal ending, the nominal protagonist, Sir Henry Bakerville, is banished, loveless, and sick.

Yes, the Hound has, as Holmes himself might say, "considerable depths." From the brooding figure of Holmes to the totemic presence of the Hound, both literal and metaphorical, The Hound of the Baskerville provides a wide field for critical examination and speculation, and it is receiving that now, along with much other Victorian popular literature. Yes, the Hound is good. He's respectable. You can now say "Sherlock Holmes" in almost any English Department without (much) fear. Putting Holmes under the high-power lens of modern critical theory is finally possible, and will not sully either criticism or the canon.

The question I'm interested in answering here is not how good Hound is as literature, anyway, but how pleasurable this big dog is. It's good to establish the "good" of HOUN as literature, I suppose, but I'm not convinced the intrinsic worthiness of a text is necessarily a requirement for it to be pleasurable vis-à-vis Roland Barthes' discourse as outlined in his The Pleasure of the Text—quite the opposite.

Any agreement as to how "worthy" a text is as literature appears, in Barthes' view, to be be completely immaterial to the

book's status as a text of pleasure. In fact, to eliminate HOUN as a text of pleasure (or bliss, Barthes' higher if somewhat different "spin" state: as in the sense of the spin states of elementary particles, the text's "electrons," its signifiers) merely because it is what it is, would seem incredibly short-sighted:

> Society of the Friends of the Text: its members would have nothing in common (for there is no necessary agreement on the texts of pleasure) but their enemies: fools of all kinds who decree foreclosure of the text and of its pleasure, either by cultural conformism or by intransigent rationalism (suspecting a mystique of literature) or by political moralism or by criticism of the signifier or by stupid pragmatism or by snide vacuity or by destruction of the discourse, loss of verbal desire (14-15).

What I propose to do is to offer my catalog of pleasure sites, a survey of the pleasure/bliss content of HOUN. That only, not a prescriptive judgment per se. I can only offer the effects, and speculate on causes: "If I agree to judge a text according to pleasure, I cannot go on to say: this one is good, that bad. No awards, no critique" (Barthes 13).

Before advancing another millimeter, it would be good to consider Barthes' definitions of "pleasure" and "bliss." I find another atomic metaphor apt. Imagine a briefing held in a tent out in the Nevada desert. Before a thermonuclear test (and a text of bliss is just that apocalyptic): "Sure, the text

(mushroom cloud?) is pleasurable (beautiful?), but what makes it blissful (dangerous?)?" Do we quake on folding chairs or proceed?

It is apparent from Barthes that there is no clear divider between "pleasure" and "bliss." He uses two different words because he must: "these expressions are ambiguous because French has no word that simultaneously covers pleasure (contentment) and bliss (rapture)" (Barthes 19). He makes clear, however, that despite his wish for a common word to describe them, that is not really possible. That pleasure and bliss are two "parallel forces, they cannot meet, and that between them is more than a struggle: an incommunication ...." (Barthes 20). For Barthes, many things can produce pleasure in a text. Bliss? That, for him, only arises from the cut, the break, the interface between a culture and a tide washing it away, between a lover and loss, between Dartmoor and London. Between 221b Baker Street and Baskerville Hall.

Bliss is orgasm. Pleasure is not, in contrast, a kiss on the cheek. It's more of the nature of the memory of a kiss on the cheek (and all the associations with/of that kiss that follow it in memory).

Let us approach Roland Barthes with our slim little volume, The Hound of the Baskervilles. Should we be embarrassed to disturb the great man from whatever blissful sleep or dimension he now inhabits (if any)? Hardly. Yes, HOUN was incredibly popular with the masses, but its mass appeal does not make it unworthy of Barthes' attention (in the form of us inhabiting his

text). As he clearly states, “No significance (bliss) can occur, I’m convinced, in a mass culture (to be distinguished, like fire from water from the culture of the masses)” (38). The Great Man (and he was that; I don’t intend that to be satiric) once called for the reevaluation of Agatha Christie as an artist, so I don’t think we have anything to fear in asking him about Sherlock Holmes.

Anyway, The Hound was not, assuredly, mass culture. Yes, there had been scientific detectives before Doyle’s creation—Poe’s Dupin and Gaboriau’s Lecoq, both of whom Holmes derides in A Study in Scarlet—but there was really nothing else like the Sherlock Holmes stories at the time they were published—or now. On the other hand, HOUN, and the rest of the canon, are reflective of the culture of the masses. Holmes was very important to the people in late Victorian England, something which is evident in the fact that He was not brought back by Doyle (who, tired of the detective’s looming presence, killed him off in 1893 in “The Final Problem”) due to some realization that Holmes provided a special kind of release/self expression for him (not entirely, anyway), but because of humbling, incredible public demand.

The old story (and, like many stories concerning the canon, possibly an apocryphal story) that workers in the City wore black armbands in mourning for Holmes after his supposed fall into Reichenbach is, “true” or not, illustrative; it’s clear that something in the great detective resonated deeply with his audience. Holmes was important to the public on a root level,

both as an expression of their culture, and, perhaps, as a last, sturdy bastion of calm logic against the onrushing 20th century (the Boer War was to give a succulent foretaste of 20th Century concentration camp chic).

May I now open the case file on this little novel? What are the bare facts ("You know my methods")? As mentioned earlier, The Hound was serialized in The Strand Magazine from August 1901 to April 1902. It caused a great sensation (and satisfaction) among the reading public, as this was the first installment to appear in the Holmes chronicle since the detective apparently perished in Moriarty's embrace. Strictly speaking, this is not the return of Sherlock Holmes, as the novel clearly takes place in an earlier, pre-Reichenbach epoch of the detective's career.

Like all the Holmes novels, this is a short one, a little less than sixty thousand words. Which is good, according to Barthes, who boldly states that "A text on pleasure cannot be anything but short (as we say: is that all? It's a bit short); since pleasure can only be spoken through the indirection of a demand ...." (18). According to Barthes, every text "of pleasure" will be intensely dilatory: "it will be an introduction to what will never be written" (18). To go on, then, is to "repeat" what cannot be written. In fact, if a criticism were to be mounted against HOUN, it would be that it, in its sparse sixty thousand words, is too long. It presents a delicious array of pleasures, but is, unfortunately, then reluctant to go gently into that good night.

The Hound of the Baskervilles, is, in some sense, with (the far less well-crafted) The Sign of Four, one of only two "real" Sherlock Holmes novels. In the other two short novels, A Study in Scarlet and The Valley of Fear, the Holmes material is, arguably, largely there to serve as a frame story for these books' tales of Mormons and Molly Maguires (both of which do little more than provide reinforcement for Barthes' "perverse" reader's skimming and skipping).

While HOUN is more of a Sherlock Holmes story than STUD or VALL, there is not too much of Holmes himself in it—he appears in the beginning, moves offstage, and reenters for the final act. There's precious little Sherlock overall, but his presence is felt, if, for no other reason than that during his absence throughout the bulk of the novel, the characters continually pine for him (even the nominal villain). The hound? He only makes three clear apparitions (including one in an 18th century manuscript), but there's plenty of him. Even moreso than Holmes, his dark form dominates the proceedings

The Hound of the Baskervilles begins, as do most of the Holmes stories, at the cozy, littered flat in Baker street, 221b (has there ever been another address that promises so much?). Here, we are inducted into the text with the usual homey Victorian atmosphere, and, as if we needed any more inducement than the gasogene, Holmes' magical parlor tricks. It seems that a visitor has waited in vain for the detective the previous evening (where have Holmes and Watson been? We don't know), and

Holmes soon offers Watson a chance to deduce the nature of their visitor from his stick.

The convenient forgetfulness of Holmes' clients recurs again and again throughout the canon (the pipe in "The Yellow Face" and the hat in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" spring immediately to mind). At first blush this little pantomime seems like a terrible, boring way to open a novel, with Watson and Holmes plodding through "deductions" about the stick's owner that are absolutely stultifying. The surprise? It works, somehow.

Yes, this kind of set-piece is more liable to create boredom than mystification or adulation in the reader when all is said and done (as Holmes often observed, relating his steps in the deductive process always had this effect). But we are not bored. Or we are at least bored in a pleasurable way. In The Pleasure Of The Text, Barthes makes two seemingly outrageous statements. First, that "Boredom is not far from bliss ...." (25). Second, and more mystifyingly, that "it is bliss: it is bliss seen from the shores of pleasure"(25). To understand these odd pronouncements (isn't boredom a bad thing?), we should return to Barthes' definition of "bliss." Bliss is found in a text that breaks, a text that discomforts, that cuts. The boredom of bliss is not the boredom of the prattle text. In a text that prattles, the boredom is not the boredom of discomfort, but the boredom of the unfocused noise spectrum, the background babble of a cooling, mindless universe.

But in what sense is boredom bliss as seen from the shores of pleasure? (Barthes 25). While the difference between pleasure and bliss is, as was mentioned earlier, not concrete, one possible major difference is that pleasure is satisfaction (perhaps, in some sense, stasis) while bliss is that cut. That rub. That pebble of discomfort between sole and shoe.

Boring or not, the walking stick scene in HOUN accomplishes at least one purpose. It distances us from Holmes. In this novel, we are not to dog his footsteps. Instead, he is to be the Man on the Tor, the wished for but not there. The Hound is atypical in its presentation of the character of Sherlock Holmes. While the relationship between Holmes and Watson is often “prickly,” and Holmes is often aloof and dismissive with Watson, his behavior here goes beyond what we’ve seen in the other stories, ranging to the cruel. Holmes offers the left behind stick to Watson to see what he can make of it (for what other reason other than to humiliate the good doctor?). Watson does his best, and is actually correct in some of his deductions.

Holmes at first appears to praise Watson’s efforts: “Really Watson, you excel yourself” (Doyle 2). This is rapidly followed by, “Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable way or stimulating it” (2). And, with a final blade-thrust, “I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous...in noting your fallacies, I was occasionally guided toward the truth.” As Leslie Klinger observes in his note 6 for HOUN in The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes, “the demonstrations

of Holmes superiority extend to the final pages...Holmes criticizes Watson's investigative powers even more mortifyingly than usual....” (Klinger 390).

This unusual friction/competition between the two men does two things besides merely distancing us from Holmes. First, it provides that interface, that rub that incites bliss. We don't care too much about the stick nor Holmes' (or Watson's) deductions about its owner; we care intensely, however, about what it reveals about the relationship between the two men. Or, more correctly, we revel in the bliss emanating from this spot, something far deeper and more...blissful...than some mere analysis of their characters.

This scene also establishes Holmes, for this particular novel, at least, as a dismissive and punishing father figure, a role he will maintain through this text in the guise of the disturbing Man on the Tor. Holmes as Father will set up one of the two Oedipal triads in this book, a good thing pleasure wise: “Death of the Father would deprive literature of many of its pleasures. If there is no longer a Father, why tell stories? Doesn't every narrative lead back to Oedipus?” (Barthes 47). Indeed, they do, and the Oedipal frictions of HOUN will prove to be a major locus of bliss.

What else can be said to be pleasurable in the first part of the novel, the London portion, with its charming Victorian settings (so charming that they are more the character of a set than a setting)? The rebuilding of fin de siecle London every time we open the book. The Baker Street scene in particular is

an important source of pleasure. The flat at 221b and all the other long-lost or never were “Victoriana scenes” give us pleasure by their mere presence. What goes on, interesting or not, boring or not, is most definitely secondary. Barthes asks, “Why do some people, including myself, enjoy in certain novels, biographies, and historical works the representation of the “daily life” of an epoch, a character?” (53). He provides the strikingly apropos answer with:

> Is it not the hallucinatory relish of “reality” (the very materiality of “that once existed”)? And is it not the fantasy itself which invokes the “detail,” the tiny private scene in which I can easily take my place? (53).

The great Sherlockian, Christopher Morley, maintained that one of the principal reasons why we are drawn to Holmes and his world is that we are allowed—no invited, encouraged—to take the third armchair in front of the fire at Baker Street; to listen at the Master’s feet. That is pleasure, articulated or not. Articulatable or not.

Following the examination of the stick, its owner, Dr. James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., make his appearance. He proceeds to read Holmes and Watson a curious 18th century manuscript he has in his possession that concerns the “Origin of the Hound of the Baskervilles,” a story of an avenging hound of the ancient Bakskerville family.

The manuscript tells of an ancestor of Mortimer’s friend, Sir Charles Baskerville, the recently deceased master of

Baskerville Hall, situated on the lonely moors of Dartmoor in Devonshire. This ancestor, one Sir Hugo, according to the manuscript kidnaps a maiden from a neighboring farm. The girl makes good her escape, but her absence is soon discovered by the “wild, profane, and godless” Hugo. He and his retainers give chase, a chase over the moor that culminates with his men’s discovery of bodies of the girl and, shortly thereafter, of Sir Hugo. The maiden is dead of fright and exhaustion, but Sir Hugo has been the victim of an enormous black hound, a hellish creature with fire spouting from its nose and mouth. When Hugo’s companions come upon it, it is still “worrying” their dead master’s throat.

Under Holmes questioning, it becomes clear that Mortimer suspects that the hound has returned and is the culprit in the death of Sir Charles, which the Coroner’s Court has ruled heart failure. An undeniable chill is always generated by the reading of Mortimer’s words when he relates what he found at what he now supposes was a murder scene: “Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!” (Doyle 18).

Scary. But where’s the pleasure? In the telling of the tale itself. It initially brings pleasure to us for the same reason the London scenes do; it is a little, perfect vignette of a lost age, one in which we are invited to participate. We don’t witness it from the audience, or even the wings, we ride into that wild, foggy, Michelmas night with Sir Hugo (Holmes, despite his initial impatience with Mortimer’s reluctance to give the

reason for his visit to 221b, is clearly spellbound, and insists on hearing the manuscript read through twice).

The hound story also provides continuing pleasure throughout the novel due to its constant repetition. Its echoes are heard page after page. After the n^{th} reference to Sir Hugo's fate, we should be bored with the laughable tale, but we are not. The continual repetition of the hound story continues to please, somehow.

How can repetition create bliss? It depends on what is being repeated and how: "in order for repetition to be erotic, it must be formal, literal and in our culture this flaunted (excessive) repetition reverts to eccentricity ...." (Barthes 41). Barthes' argument is that for bliss to be created, repetition must be something of the nature of a religious chant, the endless spinning of a prayer wheel, the uncounted counting of beads. The repetition our culture usually embraces, however, is an "embarrassed repetition" (Barthes 42) where the essential meaning remains the same, but outward form is changed in an effort to present something "new."

Clearly, the story of Sir Hugo that is repeated in these pages, voiced and unvoiced, is of the former type. It has the character of a chant, even when told in shorthand (or, perhaps, even moreso when): "That is the cause of all the mischief, the wicked Hugo, who started the Hound of the Baskervilles. We're not likely to forget him" (Doyle 113). There is neither attempt nor intent to present it as "another story."

His tale told, Mortimer reveals his purpose; he wants Holmes' advice as to what he should do about young Henry Baskerville, Sir Charles' heir. The bliss here comes from the rub between Mortimer and Holmes. While he's usually able to put his clients in a subservient position (which most of them heartily deserve and demand), Mortimer is different. Holmes believes that Mortimer believes a supernatural hound has killed Sir Charles Baskerville:

> I see that you have quite gone over to the supernaturalists. But now, Dr. Mortimer, tell me this. If you hold these views, why have you come to consult me at all? You tell me in the same breath that it is useless to investigate Sir Charles' death, and that you desire me to do it (Doyle 21).

And, then, Mortimer delivers the cutting punch line: "I did not say that I desired you to do it" (21). Much as we love Holmes, it's pleasant—blissful—to imagine his consternation (after his earlier meanness with Watson). Surely there must have been a pause of quite a few beats before Holmes recovered his composure and went on. Mortimer just wants to know what to do with Henry Baskerville, he does not want Holmes to come and save the day. To "fix it," Holmes usual purpose.

But there is yet more bliss to be had in this sitting room scene. There are, you see, some curious features of Watson's/Doyle's narrative during the interview of Doctor Mortimer. There are decidedly odd fits and starts, breaks (cuts)

in its linearity. The arrow of time sometimes seems to spin like a compass in a changing magnetic field.

In the Baker Street consulting room time passes at a strange, uneven pace. Mortimer is anxious to get Holmes' opinion on what should be done about (now Sir) Henry since he has to meet the young man at Waterloo Station "in exactly one hour and a quarter" (Doyle 21). There follows twelve short lines of dialog, four paragraphs. Mortimer then proclaims that he's due at Waterloo "In one hour and five minutes" (21). Where have those ten minutes gone? There is simply no way that the short exchanges between Holmes and Mortimer took ten minutes to recite. Five more short paragraphs of repartee pass and Mortimer declares that he only has fifty minutes left before he has to meet Baskerville's train.

One can rationalize this strange schematization of time, as Leslie Klinger does in his note 50 in the Sherlock Holmes Reference Library edition of Hound of the Baskervilles, by saying that Watson must have omitted a large amount of dialog (Doyle 22). He simply does not recount all the conversation that took place between Holmes, himself, and Mortimer. But there seems more at work here than simply the omission of unneeded details. For one thing, if Watson (Doyle) were editing the text, omitting details, why would he leave in the careful, exact time references? They are as clearly given as can be. Wouldn't this material also have been edited out?

Bliss creeps in, no matter the cause. Something is wrong here. It's as if the structure of the story has been pushed

aside and we've had a view of the (coming) quantum universe, one where time is indeterminate—or at least not always able to be determined. We have seen what shouldn't be seen, and ecstasy is the result: "Is not the most erotic portion of the body where the garment gapes?"(Barthes 9).

You want another way of looking at the time slips in 221b? Perhaps they are text-skimming in reverse. Barthes makes note and approbation of what he calls the "perverse reader," the reader who dips and skims a text, skips entire sections, who dives in and out of a book like a feeding seabird. Is the Baker Street time skipping evidence of Watson/Doyle doing this with his own text? Skimming and skipping, editing it to remove boring (if there could be such a thing) sections of the conversation between himself, Mortimer, and Holmes?

Or, if we want to assume the pleasant Sherlockian fiction that the novel was actually written by John H. Watson and edited by one Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, we can say that these gaps in time are the evidence of Doyle skipping and skimming Watson's original text account of the conversation in the Baker Street sitting room. However you play it, the result? Bliss.

Despite its reputation as a scientific detective drama, the exploits of a scientific detective, The Hound, as was intimated earlier is little of that. It proceeds as if it is a dream with little relation to logic or science. After a meeting with young Henry Baskerville in Baker Street on the day following Mortimer's appearance, Holmes and Watson discreetly tail Mortimer and Baskerville when they return to their lodgings in

Northumberland Street. In Regent Street Holmes notices a hansom cab and realizes that its bearded passenger is also following Baskerville and Mortimer. This spy makes his getaway, and Holmes observes that the passenger's black beard must be false: "A clever man on so delicate an errand has no use for a beard save to disguise his features" (Doyle 35).

Frankly, any way it's read, the statement makes little sense. Does Holmes mean that a discreet agent wouldn't have use for a beard since it would make him stand out from the crowd? If so, why disguise himself in a beard and make himself stand out from the crowd (we assume that it was the beard that drew Holmes' attention in the first place)?

The above is not the astonishing thing, however. It's what follows. What does Holmes do as soon as he arrives at the Northumberland Hotel? He asks Dr. Mortimer, "Have you among your neighbors or acquaintances on Dartmoor any man with a full, black beard?" (Doyle 38). If Holmes is defined by his logical approaches to problem solving, this must be the nadir. Why, oh why, does he ask about real beards if he's sure, as he told Watson, that the cab passenger's beard is false?

There are numerous other incidents in the novel where its science and Holmes' science come up wanting. For example, Holmes happily chirps at the end of the book that the pseudo hellhound has been given its frightening appearance by the use of phosphorous, which has been painted on its muzzle. Phosphorus, however, is a deadly poison to man and dog (which Holmes with his vaunted knowledge of chemistry and Watson/Doyle with their

medical training obviously knew). Again the garment gapes. We see the tender, exposed flesh, the reality, the quantum disorder that underlies the crystalline and Newtonian Victorian universe.

The Hound abandons logic and science. There is nothing of the kind here. The absurd universe of the hound-filled moor is no field for (the real) Sherlock Holmes. That's why, I think, we are not be allowed to see much of him there. The Holmes we will see at the climax of the Hound is an odd, crippled creature spouting ridiculous conclusions. There's just no place for him once the novel starts rolling.

Whether or not the hound exists in real reality, its frightening form exists most assuredly in psychic reality for Watson, Mortimer, and Baskerville. Against this very real supernatural entity, Holmes is powerless, as he admits at the beginning of the book when he supposes that Mortimer believes the hound is "real": "In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task" (Doyle 20). At the end of the novel we will see Holmes on the moor, as he attempts to restore order, but, as we shall also see, he does this in a curiously hopeless and desultory fashion and is rewarded with questionable results.

What else can we make of this supposedly scientific detective novel's lack of science? Is its lack evidence that it's missing something? Perhaps not. Maybe, instead, the lapses in science in HOUN are more an indication that the novel chooses to focus upon the subtleties of the moor and (especially) its denizens. Barthes thinks that our resort to science is not

necessarily a strength. We turn to this form of analysis of reality because our course senses are not suited for subtlety. We cannot sense the underlying flux of the universe, the quantum reality. Unable to see the moment to moment changes around us, we embrace a static world. “We are scientific because we lack subtlety.” (Barthes 61).

Holmes’ science in the novel is more a “science” of intuitions and hunches than laboratory analysis. Maybe that is why he needed to ask about real beards in Chapter 5.

But even Holmes’ usually well-developed professional sense seems lacking. Why does he, for example, trust a fourteen-year-old boy to visit twenty-three hotels in search of a newspaper from which the words that compose a warning that Henry Baskerville receives in London have been clipped? The warning, which Holmes claims to take seriously does, seems ominous after all: “As you value your life or your reason, keep away from the moor”(Doyle 28).

It could be said that this drift of the text away from the supposedly logical and scientific tends to fulfill one other very important requirement: it begins the divorce from (supposed) Victorian rationalism, which will be useless in Devonshire. This spin away from logic allows us to more easily embrace and enter Dartmoor.

HOUN proceeds like--and with the logic of--a dream. It is not a thing of the laboratory, but of misty, moonlit moors. Things happen that appear, at first blush, logical, but the logic crumbles upon our awakening. Holmes sends telegrams with

incomplete addresses, but get results anyway (he summons the cabman whose fare was trailing Baskerville and Mortimer just by giving the cab company the address of the Northumberland Hotel). Watson is dispatched to the moors to watch over Baskerville with no protest nor any thought to his supposed medical practice (it is unclear where HOUN comes in the sequence of Holmes stories; it's possible that it took place earlier in the Holmes-Watson partnership, before Watson established his medical practice, of course). It will all be alright in the morning.

Certainly, the dreamlike character of The Hound of the Baskervilles is no impediment to the production of pleasure or bliss. It encourages that: "Dreaming allows for, supports, releases, brings to light an extreme delicacy of moral, sometimes even metaphysical, sentiments ...." (Barthes 59). The dream makes everything easier, including the appearance of pleasure. HOUN lets nothing stand in its way toward its goal of proceeding to Dartmoor (where bliss is to be found). Not telegrams, not beards, not busy general practitioners.

While the dream character of the novel excuses some of its lapses, we are still puzzled at times. Holmes insists that Watson go to Dartmoor alone (excusing himself by saying that he's busy working an important blackmail case, something we don't believe for an instant). Holmes asserts that "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" (Doyle 41). That's nice. However, just a few chapters previously, in the walking stick scene, Holmes has made Watson out to be a

complete dunderhead. Yet, suddenly, Watson is most qualified to investigate what Holmes believes is turning into quite a nasty little case and to protect one of the most wealthy men in Britain. We'll take Holmes at his word, but strongly suspect that the good, gray doctor is actually being used as hound bait.

And, thus, Watson, Baskerville and Mortimer proceed to Dartmoor without Holmes (as far as they know). Pleasure begins upon their arrival. Much of the initial pleasure in the Dartmoor half of HOUN comes from Watson's frequently repeated descriptions of the moor scenery: "but behind the peaceful and sunlit countryside there rose ever, dark against the evening sky, the long gloomy curve of the moor, broken by the jagged and sinister hills" (Doyle, 49). This first glimpse is followed after a few pages by "a narrow grassy path struck off from the road and wound away across the moor. A steep boulder-sprinkled hill lay upon the right ...." (57). And just a little later "but the trees, as is usual upon the moor, were stunted and nipped, and the effect…was mean and melancholy" (64).

Where is the pleasure? Though Watson's descriptions of the moor, which appear page after page to the end of the novel, usually present it as a gloomy, depressing setting, we feel pleasure nonetheless. Even the oft-repeated descriptions of the Great Grimpen Mire, a bog were wild "moor ponies" sink and die screaming ("A false step yonder means death to man or beast" (Doyle 58).) fills us with pleasure. We listen to Watson recite his litany of the gloomy moor again, and again, and we do not become bored.

As with the story of Hugo and the hound, we come to derive pleasure from the constantly repeated descriptions of the bleak scenery. And the interface between our staid physician friend and the wild countryside brings bliss.

The first part of The Hound of the Baskervilles is pretty much what most readers would expect. The London scenes are the prim stuff of gentlemen's flats and clubs and, with the exception of the intrusion of the Hound-Hugo tale, all is calm and orderly (so calm that a least a one film version of the novel put a gun in the hand of the bearded cab passenger in Regent Street, having Holmes thwart an attempted assassination in order to spice things up).

Watson's clubby, good-chap story telling hardly prepares the reader for the sexuality that will appear on the moor. Almost as soon as Watson, Baskerville, and Mortimer arrive at Baskerville Hall, we see the makings of the first Oedipal "setup." The role of "son" in this triad is filled by the story's nominal protagonist, Sir Henry Baskerville, who, while portrayed in films as a robust proto-English-lord/lad, is in the novel itself basically an ineffectual character.

It's clear that he's badly frightened from the moment he arrives at the Hall: "I feel a bit out of the picture at present. I don't doubt that my uncle got a little jumpy if he lived all alone in a house such as this" (Doyle 52). Later, hearing what he supposes to be the howl of a/the hound, he begs Watson to: "Feel my hand!" (Doyle 80). Watson seems surprised to find that "It was as cold as a block of marble" (80).

We are told by Watson that Henry soon falls in love with Beryl Stapleton, a neighbor on the moor who lives with her “brother,” “Jack,” in nearby Merripit House. While Watson asserts that Henry is “deeply stirred” by Beryl, we see little evidence of this. His ardor seems lacking, even if we attribute a lack of evidence of it to Watson’s usual circumspection. For example, he doesn’t contrive, as far as we can tell, to see Miss Stapleton alone until Chapter 9 (a meeting which will end disastrously).

If Baskerville doesn’t seem much like a young man deeply in love with a beautiful woman (and Watson tells us time and again that she is that), Beryl hardly displays the mutual attraction that Watson asserts for her. The only communications from her to Sir Henry (that we are allowed to hear, anyway) are warnings. It in fact transpires that she is the person who sent the “stay away from the moor” letter in Chapter 4. The first time we see her, she mistakes Watson for Sir Henry, and implores him to “Go straight back to London immediately” (Doyle 62).

We do not hear the conversation between Beryl and Henry in Chapter 9, but it seems doubtful that she spoke words of love. Watson, playing protective voyeur, says that Baskerville “drew her to his side. His arm was around her, but it seemed to me that she was straining away from him” (Doyle 74). When Beryl’s “brother” Jack appears on the scene to break up the little tête-à-tête, she does not seem disturbed or upset in the least; she merely stands by in “haughty silence.”

Although we are informed later in the story (by Holmes) that Jack Stapleton had to take action to prevent Baskerville from “making love” to Beryl, there seems to have been little chance of that happening. Again, though Watson tells us that Henry is deeply enthralled with Beryl, and is ready to make love to her, he never gets around to it whether he actually is inclined to do so or not. In the face of Jack Stapleton’s opposition to Henry’s feeble romancing in Chapter 9, Henry, like the shrinking violet he is, agrees to Stapleton’s terms, that he not pay court to Beryl for three months. We can’t imagine that Henry would have made much headway, even had things been different, even after three more months. Beryl is the Mother, attempting to shield Henry from the Moor and the hound (Henry Baskerville’s real mother, by the way, is not mentioned in the novel).

Henry as son. Beryl as mother. The other member of the Baskerville Oedipal trio? Beryl’s supposed brother, who, it turns out at the end of the novel, is really her husband (in the end, we, of course, discover that not only is he not Beryl’s brother, he is not Jack Stapleton at all; he is Sir Henry’s cousin (!), Roger Baskerville Jr.). While Jack has cast Beryl in the sister role himself to help in his plan to separate Sir Henry from his inheritance, he finds himself in conflict (if not a serious one) with Henry for the affections of Beryl.

After the above outburst in Chapter 9 where Stapleton breaks up the meeting between his sister/wife and his cousin Henry, Jack does try to mollify Baskerville, and that is where

they reach their agreement that Henry will hold his passions—such as they are—in check for three months. In this three-way relationship, Stapleton doesn't seem a rival with Baskerville for Beryl's affections. Instead, he is very much the punishing Father, not hesitant to claim what is his (even when that may interfere with his scheme to part Henry from his life and fortune), and bar the young Henry from his "Mother," Beryl.

In truth, as Barthes says, there would not be much of a story without this Oedipal conflict. Our shock (bliss) would not be nearly so intense when we find that Jack Stapleton/Roger Baskerville is the fiend behind the death of Sir Charles and the plot against Sir Henry without the Oedipal wife/sister/cousin/mother/father confusion. This constant swapping of roles, this friction, this gaping of garments (that is, the sudden revelation of the true status of the characters), creates bliss throughout part two of the novel. We don't know the truth till the end, but even before Beryl is revealed as Jack's wife, we sense sexual competition between her "brother" and her "lover" (Henry).

Then there is the "Man on the Tor," Sherlock Holmes. Holmes is divorced from the action in the second part of the novel (though most of this, and especially the escaped convict subplot, is of little consequence). When Holmes does finally appear in Chapter 11, he's not much like the Holmes of yore, the pre-Reichenbach Holmes, that is. We see few flashes of the old man of action, the sometimes prickly, but always devoted companion of Watson. Here, Holmes is unusually stern, judgmental

and distant from the good doctor. And he just doesn't seem to be on his game. Through his lack of attention to detail (he forgets that fog is likely on the moor at night), he nearly allows Sir Henry to be gobbled up by the pseudo hellhound Jack/Roger sets upon the Baskerville heir in the climax of the novel.

Holmes continues the meanness to Watson he displayed in Chapter 1 in Chapter 12. When asked by Watson why he's been kept in the dark about Holmes' presence on the moor (the detective has been camping out in one of the moor's "Neolithic" stone huts), Holmes demonstrates that he doesn't trust Watson's sense or discretion: "For you to have known could not have helped us, and might possibly have lead to our discovery. You would have wished to tell me something ...." (Doyle 103). In other words, Watson was trusted with Baskerville's life (Holmes, out on the moor or in the nearby village "investigating," couldn't have done much to save Baskerville if the hound had come upon him), but not to keep secret that Holmes was on-site? Although Holmes has never been sparing in his criticisms of Watson, his constant corrections in HOUN seem to make him less a friend than a stern, correcting "father" for poor Watson.

But it's all to the good, for us, anyway, as the rough interface between Watson and Holmes again proves a source of bliss. We love the ascetic Holmes, but we also love good, old Watson. The division of our loyalties in this scene and the walking stick scene proves a huge source of bliss, if not pleasure.

The Holmes of the moor doesn't seem much like Watson's old friend. In fact, he seems another criticizing, punishing Father. Watson doesn't have his say, he, like a hurt child merely has his tears staunched by a semi-kindly word: "'That's better,' said he, seeing the shadow rise from my face" (Doyle 103). If Holmes functions as Watson's distant Father, who is Watson's Mother? Laura Lyons, perhaps?

There seems little doubt that Watson is drawn to this woman, who, we eventually find out, was instrumental in luring Sir Charles Baskerville, Henry's uncle, onto the moor where he could be frightened to death by a hound-dog costumed to terrify by Jack Stapleton/Roger Baskerville. Watson suspects this when he goes to question Miss Lyons, but,

> The first impression left by Mrs. Lyons was one of extreme beauty. Her eyes and hair were of the same rich hazel color, and her cheeks though considerably freckled, were flushed with the exquisite bloom of the brunette, the dainty pink which lurks at the heart of the sulphur rose" (Doyle 92).

Despite obviously being attracted to the woman, Watson also, however, feels that "There was something wrong with the face...some hardness, perhaps ...." (Doyle 92).

While Laura Lyons is beautiful and desirable, Watson, if the dialog he gives us is complete, makes no attempt to seduce her, despite the fact that the glowing description of the woman shows he has obviously been deeply affected by her. Something in her makes her unapproachable. Watson wants her, but can't touch

her. Her hard face, her angry tone throughout the interview (“What is the object of these questions? (Doyle 92).) all conspire to make her an icy Mother rather than a lover—for Watson.

If Lyons is Mother, who is Watson’s Father? Holmes? He has perhaps already visited Laura Lyons or at least intends to do so. When Watson briefs Holmes about his interview with Lyons, Holmes replies that “Our researches have evidently been running on parallel lines ....” (Doyle 102). Is The Man on the Tor, Holmes, attracted to Laura Lyons himself? Has he perhaps even been making love to her in a much more real sense than Henry Baskerville has with Beryl Stapleton?

On the face of it, that would seem absurd. However, Holmes tells us that he has not spent his entire Dartmoor sojourn on the moor; that he has been living in the village of Coombe Tracy where Ms. Lyons also lives. Leslie Klinger mentions in his note 181 for HOUN (Doyle 101), that it’s certainly suspicious that, when Watson encounters Holmes on the moor, he finds him looking surprisingly well-turned- out: “he had contrived…that his chin should be as smooth and his linen as perfect as if he were in Baker Street” (Doyle 101). Is Holmes sharpness with Watson a symptom of his displeasure at hearing of Watson’s visit with Laura?

If none of the above convinces, consider the fact that Laura Lyons, is pretty obviously at least an accessory in the murder of Sir Charles Baskerville. Holmes lets her off scott-free, appearing to prefer to look upon her as an injured party

(apparently she really was Jack Stapleton/Roger Baskerville's lover, thought Beryl was really Stapleton's sister, and hoped to marry the scoundrel).

If Holmes was not really Laura Lyon's lover, it's at least pleasant to think he was. The mere hint (and there is at least that) of sexual conflict/competition among Holmes and Watson and Roger Baskerville brings intense bliss.

The sexual permutations of HOUN don't end with these Oedipal combos. There is prominently and importantly the famous scene at the end of the novel where Beryl Stapleton is revealed to have felt the whip of her husband. Following the rescue of Henry Baskerville from Stapleton/Baskerville's ersatz "hound," Beryl is discovered tied to a post amid her husband's collection of (pinned) butterflies. Watson tries to convince us that the scene is different from what we know it to be, that he merely "saw the clear red weal of a whip-lash across her neck" (Doyle 124). Stapleton's tied her to a post fully clothed and whipped her on her neck? We're hardly convinced that's the truth of the scene.

While Watson does his best to portray Beryl as the wronged woman, she has stayed with Stapleton till the end, supposedly only turning on him at the conclusion of the novel, when she discovers that he's been sleeping with Laura Lyons. It is not even completely clear, however, that she has sundered herself from the man even at this point.

She leads Holmes and Watson to the island in the Mire where Stapleton has kenneled his hound, but this, at best, seems

designed only to save her own skin, and may have been a prearranged dodge designed by Stapleton to put Holmes off the scent in the event that his and Beryl's plans went awry.

But the point is that the garment has gaped. We don't care much whether Beryl is good or bad (she did warn Henry once and attempt to warn him once again). What we care about is that we've seen the underlying flashes of a perverse outer universe, far, far from the rooms in Baker Street where all human affairs are tied up in string and handed to the reader in pretty packages, not tied to whipping posts amid dead butterflies.

That whiplash has burned into our consciousness in addition to Beryl's revealed flesh. Moreso than the thought of the lash, though, it's the interface between Watson and his world of Good Girls and Stapleton and his world of girls who'll allow themselves to be bound and whipped that jacks-up the bliss.

What other pleasures are to be found in the second half of the novel? Its lovely neurotic character. Watson produces constant paranoia with his recital of the gloomy character of the moor. We know there's a hound to be feared out there. Impossible, of course, BUT... This flooding paranoia, this neurosis, is necessary for the complete seduction of the reader. No, there's probably no hound, at least no spectral hound in an objective-reality sense, but we share in the paranoia and begin to fear it, anyway.

A non-neurotic HOUN text, one without the fears, the anxieties, the divisions that create the tension would assume the character of that scientific treatise Holmes always claimed

he hoped Watson would one day write. The story of the hound would assume the character of prattling. Mere endless noise about phosphorous-painted doggy-hounds.

Clearly, the very idea of the hound is ridiculous, as Holmes says in Chapter 2. Nevertheless, we are drawn into the text, carried along on the wave of neurotic fear that's been inspired by nothing more than an old manuscript and Mortimer's unverified claim of having seen those footprints. None of the novel makes any sense without the presence of collective neurosis.

In our tramp across Dartmoor with Watson, we discover numerous sites of pleasure and bliss. But there's no denying that a Hound without a hound isn't much of a Hound. We are promised a hellhound for 13 chapters, teased and seduced by that vision of a fire breathing canine, and, by God, we must have our hound. The penultimate scene must come through for us. How well does the final confrontation with the hound by Holmes, and Watson, Baskerville (and, curiously, the Scotland Yard detective Lestrade, who's been summoned to Dartmoor by Holmes for some inexplicable reason) deliver?

The hound chapter has its faults, both as storytelling and as pleasure producer. In the latter category is the fact that this scene does, like the unmasking/revelations of other similar mystery yarns, merely provide the final and ultimately unsatisfying flourish in a "striptease." What should have been wonderful (we were promised) is reduced to the mere tossing of a glove to the audience. That's all that can be done. After nearly

sixty thousand words of teasing, nothing, no hound, would adequately satisfy.

It is this slip/bra/g-string progression (with long interludes between peelings), this striptease, that Barthes warns against when he says “The pleasure of the text is not the pleasure of the corporeal striptease or of narrative suspense” (Barthes, 10). Far from feeling pleasure or bliss in the long-running “suspense” of HOUN or feeling some blissful/orgasmic release at the revelation that the hound is just a murderous dog trained by Stapleton/Baskerville to rid himself of inconvenient family members, we are frustrated. This is not suspense; it is coitus interruptus. When it comes to the hound in the Hound, we feel a falling off in the erotic bliss created in other ways by the novel, in its flashes of revelation, the garment gaping.

It is perhaps a good thing for our continued enjoyment of the novel that the unmasking is not a major source of bliss. As Barthes notes, “nothing says that this same text will please us a second time ....” (Barthes 52). Not only can pleasure or bliss be a thing of moments and moods, bliss, especially, depends on a certain “newness.” The fact that bliss and pleasure are roughly distributed throughout HOUN in numerous sites helps maintain this newness a second or hundredth time through the novel. To place all bliss in the hound revelation would make the book a one trick...doggie.

The hound has come and gone. The facts have been recorded, such as they are. We can see Doyle (or Watson, if you prefer) shaking his head over the MS. It really doesn’t make much sense,

not like “The Red Headed League” or A Study in Scarlet. Too many loose ends, too many inconsistencies. Watson/Doyle do attempt to tidy things us by adding a bookend 221b scene, the “A Retrospection” chapter. This is merely a clumsy bit of writing that attempts to sum up what cannot be summed up. How can pleasure and bliss and dreams be summed up, quantified, and explained?

Far from lending scientific credibility to this dream, the ridiculous “Retrospection” is fruitless and senseless. Far from serving Watson/Doyle’s obvious purpose of removing our doubts and fears, it only makes the text seem more dream like and illogical and frightening. It’s clear from the fumblings in this last chapter that there are no explanations.

When we attempts to examine the motivation for Roger Baskerville/Jack Stapleton’s depredations with the lens of logic, the whole story falls apart. Roger Baskerville, it’s clear, bet his life and freedom on a clearly doomed enterprise. He masquerades as Jack Stapleton in order to do Sir Charles (and later Sir Henry) in, but how, then, does he plan to claim the fortune? He can’t appear in person to claim the Baskerville fortune. What has it all—the hound and the sister masquerade--been for?

There is an evident and singular lack of conviction in this final chapter. We are told several times that Holmes has lost interest in the case; that he has moved on. When pressed to “explain” this hardly logical affair, particularly, the silly suggestion that Stapleton/Roger Baskerville could claim the

inheritance after Sir Henry is disposed of, Holmes offers the absurd suggestion that Roger could return to Costa Rica, where he'd been living abroad, and claim the inheritance from there. Even if this were possible, this has been foreclosed by the fact that Baskerville/Stapleton is a wanted man in that country, as we've been carefully informed early in the book. Holmes' other hem-hawing ideas about Roger Baskerville's modus operandi are equally bizarre (maybe he could disguise himself...perhaps with a...BEARD).

But, yes, and surprisingly, this silly tacked-on denouement does provide some pleasure. The pleasure is generated by Holmes and his unwilling and scarcely internal struggle to reconcile the events of this dream-case with his ordered Victorian universe. It is not exactly Holmes' vain attempts and obvious discomfiture that bring this bliss (for it is that rather than "mere" pleasure), it is the grinding of the cold and logicless world of the moor/quantum against the order of Holmes' London.

As we leave Baskerville Hall, it seems to have much in common with Poe's sinking house of Usher. The hound is banished (perhaps...how did Stapleton contrive to set the hound on the convict he mistook for Sir Henry? The encounter happened miles away from Merripit house. Was there another hound?), Sir Henry is "safe" (but his health is broken, he's lost The Girl, and he must leave Dartmoor to put his ravaged body back together). Stapleton/Baskerville has sunk in the Grimpen Mire (perhaps...there is no clear evidence, despite what Holmes tries to tell us, that this has actually happened). Whipped Beryl is

adrift and alone (or is she?). Laura Lyons has lost her man and must be a Good Girl from now on (or must she? She knows she got away with being an accessory to murder in the death of Charles Baskerville). Above all, the Hall looms empty. Henry Baskerville's (western) optimism and plans to restore it lie dead on the moor with Roger's hound.

Yes, HOUN produces pleasure, and perhaps even more bliss. And it does this in a manner wholly different from the other Holmes outings. In most of the short stories, our pleasure (there's far less bliss, usually) comes from two sources, that long-lost or neverbeen Victorian landscape. And, secondly, the slight-of-hand tricks of logic of Holmes. Both of these pleasure sites appear at the beginning of The Hound of the Baskervilles, but, rocked with bliss on the moor, we scarcely remember them until the final, weary return to 221b.

HOUN is different. What we see in it is not a restoration of order by Holmes, but a revelation (or celebration) of a lack of underlying order and an obvious inability to restore what isn't there. This novel, published at the dawn of the twentieth century, provides us with skin-bearing flashes of what's coming: Einstein and Planck and their uncomforting "order": we not only don't know the structure of reality, we can't know it, and there may not (probably not) be one. In a universe where lovers morph into mothers and sisters into wives at the turn of a page, it's not surprising to find that elementary (My Dear Watson?) particles can and do appear, dance, and disappear, like fire-lit hounds on the barren moor of the quantum universe.

Works Cited

Barthes, Roland. The Pleasure of the Text. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1975.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. The Hound of the Baskervilles. Ed. Leslie S. Klinger. Indianapolis: Gasogene Books, 2002.

Klinger, Leslie S., ed. The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes. By Arthur Conan Doyle. Vol. 3. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006.