A Physical and Spiritual ‘Throwback—’

Solving the Mystery that is Conan Doyle’s
The Hound of the Baskervilles
by Mable Buchanan

“Yes, it is an interesting case of a throwback, which appears to be both physical and spiritual. A study of family portraits is enough to convert a man to the doctrine of reincarnation. The fellow is a Baskerville—that is evident.”
The Mystery

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has proposed a puzzle. He has created a story with layers of hidden meaning, and only you courageous six, his dinner guests, are equipped with the expertise to work together and figure out the purpose.
Chronology of Events

• Visit of Dr. James Mortimer; the manuscript legend
• Second visit of Dr. Mortimer with Sir Henry
• Watson and Sir Henry at Dartmoor (Epistolary Chapters)
• Holmes reunites with Watson at Dartmoor
• Confrontation of the Hound
List of Suspects

- Alan Dundes, folklorist (Cyclical Fate)
- Friedrich Nietzsche, philosopher (Eternal Recurrence)
- Sigmund Freud, psychoanalyst (The Uncanny & Psychic Structures)
- Charles Darwin, evolutionary biologist (Biology and Social Stratification)
- Jacques Derrida, philosopher (Deconstruction)
- C.G. Jung, psychoanalyst (Psychic Structures & Individuation)
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The Game’s Afoot!

Please brace yourselves for participation.
A Metaphysical Roundtable

• Through the incorporation of multiple perspectives, the reader is able to identify the purposefully psychospiritual engagement of Doyle’s Victorian audience and its significance for the continuation of Holmes’ narrative post-hiatus, for each character within the context of the story, and for a Victorian context preoccupied with less subversive norm preservation.
Darwin: The First Clue Lies in the Scene of the Crime

“A Case of Identity”—

- Victorian England: Conflagration of Virtue with Class, Character, and Moral and Intellectual Superiority
- Socioeconomic Stratification
- Imperialism and the “other”
- Identity for Holmes and for the Emerging Detective Genre
- Biological Determinism and Pseudoscientific “Progress”
- Evolutionary Biology and the Influence of Darwin
Dundes Finds the Second Clue

- The First ‘Throwback—’ Holmes’ Reincarnation
- Input of Betram Fletcher Robinson & Sir Richard Cabell
- *The Hound of the Baskervilles* as Myth
  - Sacred Oral Narrative
  - Explanation of Circumstances
  - Unconscious culture
  - Cyclical Storytelling
Nietzsche: “Returning to the Scene of the Crime is In Itself the Third Clue”

The “Returns” of Sherlock Holmes

- Nietzsche and Myth: *Thus Spake Zarathustra*
- Nietzsche andCircularity: *The Birth of Tragedy*
  - Eternal Recurrence: the “unconditional and indefinitely repeated circular course of things,” and gradual progression and unification of opposites.
  - “All truth is crooked; time itself is a circle.”
  - “The past bites everything Future in the tail.”—The Ouroborus
Freud Returns from the Brain-Attic with the Fourth Clue

- Superego, ego, and id (Hugo Baskerville)
- The uncanny
  - Familiar and unknown (dog, terrain)*
  - Life and death* and the supernatural
  - Suspension of disbelief, or real and fantastical*
  - Repression of trauma / “Return of the Repressed”
- The evil eye
- The double

Invocation of the Uncanny -> Ouroboric Introspection -> Individuation
Derrida: “The Fifth Clue is that There is No Clue”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
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<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td>Death</td>
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<tr>
<td>Familiar/Safety</td>
<td>Unknown/Danger</td>
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<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Beast</td>
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Dundes: Circularity in these diametrically-opposed binaries implies a cultural unconscious.

Nietzsche: The negative will subvert the positive to question its validity and transcend the distinction. (Beyond Good & Evil)

Derrida: The negative is only defined by its subjective inadherence to the values of the positive, making both inherently inaccurate. (Deconstruction)

Jung: Rather than deconstructed, these binaries are unified in the development of the Self.
Jung: The Sixth Clue Lies in the Search: Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Hound? (persona, self, and shadow)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Concepts for which the Hound is emblematic</th>
<th>Values of a Victorian English ‘Gentlemanly’ Ethos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Savagery</td>
<td>• Sophistication</td>
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<td>• Deviance</td>
<td>• Normative Behavior</td>
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<td>• Violence</td>
<td>• Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ungodliness</td>
<td>• Christianity</td>
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<td>• Atavism (Biological Determinism)</td>
<td>• Progress</td>
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The Hound, in representing the Shadow, illustrates that these “regressed” behaviors can even be evident in the Victorian English ostensible “Gentleman,” and *that* is the true source of Doyle’s characters’ fear—not a demon dog, but their own Shadow.
Nekyia: The Final Problem

- Why is this case Holmes’ “biggest thing for years,” and what makes it integral to Doyle’s canon? Why did Doyle end the hiatus?
  - Dark Night of the Soul: invocation of lunar consciousness inspired by the Greek understandings of Nekyia and Katabasis
  - Nekyia and Individuation
    - Symbolism and the (Collective) Unconscious: Archetypes
    - Holmes as Katabatic Figure; mid-hiatus placement and metafictional questioning of reality invite Dream Analysis
  - Holmes’ Nekyic Method: “My spirit has hovered”
Symbolism in the Novel

• The Moor as Unconscious or “Terra Incognita,” “bleak and desolate”
  • Baskerville Hall and the “forgotten” ancient civilization (cultural unconscious)
  • False steps in the Grimpen Mire and the confrontation of complexes in the psyche

• Baskerville Hall as the Underworld, and Hugo as Hades
  • “a maze of fantastic tracery in wrought iron” at the end of a long drive
  • Hades’ abduction of Persephone and Hugo’s repeated “reincarnations”
Doyle: The Big Reveal

• How to Accomplish the same for his Victorian audience:
  • Create a surreal, mythic, Nekyic landscape which will attract an audience driven to escapism
  • Litter it with artifacts of the cultural unconscious so that they feel invited to project their own subconscious
  • Carefully incorporate symbolism and repeated deconstructed binary opposites to question received truth both within and outside of the novel/challenge the reader’s “brain-attic”
  • Confront the Shadows without the defeat of which neither Doyle nor his audience can move forward. (end of hiatus)
“Now is the dramatic moment of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is walking into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill.”


