The strange case of the creeping man

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Arthur Conan Doyle’s tale ‘The Creeping Man’ first appeared in the *Strand* magazine in March 1923 and was collected with eleven other stories in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, published by John Murray in 1927. Though it is a post-war composition, the action of the story takes place in September 1903, and Watson, in narrating it, describes it as ‘one of the very last cases handled by Holmes before his retirement from practice.’¹ In several interviews given on his tour of America, which started the month after this tale was published, Conan Doyle declared that he had decided to write no more Holmes stories, feeling that he should devote his energies to his commitments to Spiritualism.² For a whole year he abstained.³ Not for the first time, Holmes proved difficult to lay to rest, and more of his cases were to follow. But there are indications that, at least for a while, Conan Doyle thought of ‘The Creeping Man’ as a last word from, and about, Sherlock Holmes.

‘The Creeping Man’, a story about a scientist whose bizarre and violent behaviour is discovered to be the consequence of a self-administered drug, has been dismissed as ‘a weak reworking of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.⁴ Indeed Stevenson was something of a model or strong precursor for his fellow Scot, Edinburgh University alumnus, and lapsed professional. ‘I never met Robert Louis Stevenson in the flesh,’ Conan Doyle was to recall, ‘though I owe so much to him in the literary spirit.’⁵

All stories turn on anagnorisis, or disclosure, and in the nineteenth-century fiction on which Stevenson and Conan Doyle were brought up there is a widespread *topos*, so pervasive as to be almost invisible, of the discovery of secrets. Meanwhile, as suggested by the ‘strange case’ of Dr Jekyll, and the ‘case-book’ of Sherlock Holmes, the emergence of the professional protocols
of law, medicine, experimental science, and police work were all producing the case as the form in which events or situations could be systematically described and understood. Closure is sought in an explanation which, as desiderated by Utterson in *Dr Jekyll*, ‘is plain and natural, hangs well together and delivers us from all exorbitant alarms’, so that, to quote Sherlock Holmes in ‘The Creeping Man’, ‘[t]he various incidents will now fit themselves easily into the general scheme’ (CB, p. 71). These metaphors of structure – hanging well together, fitting into a scheme – themselves disclose the way the solution to the problem is also what enables it to be told as a narrative, in a symbiosis of aetiology and discourse. As Bennett tells the detective at the conclusion of ‘The Creeping Man’: ‘Well, thanks to you, Mr Holmes, it is very clear that we have traced the evil to its source’ (CB, p. 70). In comparison, the aetiology of Dr Jekyll’s case is more complex and a great deal darker, necessitating a more laboured, difficult, indeed modernist narrative structure. The aim of this essay is to explore the relationship between the Stevenson and the Conan Doyle case, the transformation of the former into the latter. They rest on a similar narrative premise: there is no doubt that one provided inspiration for the other, and these two stories are a part of each other’s history. Certainly Conan Doyle felt respect for and kinship with Stevenson, which makes the differences between the tales the more telling. What ‘The Creeping Man’ does to *Dr Jekyll* turns out to be a strange case of its own.

Both these stories centre on a mystery that is investigated and solved. All the Holmes stories do this, to be sure, but in ‘The Creeping Man’ Conan Doyle seems to be following the matter of the Stevenson tale quite closely. An eminent man of science, with a reputation for being progressive, materialistic, and rational, is observed behaving oddly, and there are episodes of rage and violence. Somehow he is not himself. His household become alarmed, professional friends or colleagues are mobilised to investigate, the scientist tries to guard his secret but in the end
is revealed to have used his professional expertise to acquire a transgressive knowledge or powers. For the public, the scientist may have been the avatar of modernity, but in both these stories, his quest puts this man of high intellect on a path to regression or degeneration, apparently reversing the Darwinian narrative of the descent of man from the apes. Mr Hyde looks troglodytic (JH, p. 16), and is characterised by ‘raging energies’ and bursts of ‘ape-like fury’ (JH, p. 20). In the Conan Doyle story, Professor Presbury’s knuckles are thick and horny (CB, p. 67). He is ‘overflowing with energy and vitality’ (ibid.), and has been seen to go on all fours.

Both these tales about the dangers of research are in the species of cautionary science fiction whose heyday coincided with the knowledge revolution of the late nineteenth century, and was roughly bracketed by these two publications, between the 1880s and the 1920s. Their literary antecedents go back to Mary Shelley’s minatory *Frankenstein* (1818), and further to various instantiations of the Faustus story. Dr Jekyll’s hubristic investigations conjure up a diabolical force that he is then unable to shake off. But here there is an important distinction to be made. Conan Doyle’s scientist is no tragic Faust or doomed Victor Frankenstein. If anything, Professor Presbury’s motives belong in traditional comedy, and he is a version of the drooling Plautine Senex aspiring to a sexy young girl. This too may be some sort of echo of the Stevenson tale, where the sedentary middle-aged Jekyll transforms himself into the vigorous and satyr-like young Hyde. A widower of 61, Conan Doyle’s professor has become engaged to a much younger woman. ‘It was not the reasoned courting of an elderly man but rather the passionate frenzy of youth,’ Holmes is told (CB, p. 53). But the Senex, as ever, is an anxious lover. Alice Morphy is described as ‘a very perfect girl both in mind and body’. Her father approves of the match, for Presbury is distinguished and wealthy, but the girl with the perfect body ‘had other views’ (CB, p. 53). Though she likes the
Professor in spite of his eccentricities, and though it is ‘only age which stood between them’, she does seem hesitant, and there are several younger candidates for her hand. About this time, Presbury makes a mysterious journey to Prague, and returns, furtive, and ‘under some shadow which had darkened his higher qualities’ (CB, p. 54). As Holmes later discovers, the professor has acquired, from the disreputable Dr Lowenstein of Prague, a rejuvenative serum derived from a monkey, the black-faced langur, described as the ‘biggest and most human of climbing monkeys’ (CB, p. 70), to juice up his sexual powers. Back in England, he is kept supplied with the drug by a shady dealer in the East End, a Bohemian called Dorak.

It seems certain this part of the tale has in mind the treatment to restore sexual potency developed in 1918 by the physiologist Eugen Steinach, which became very popular in the early 1920s, and was rumoured, falsely, to involve a serum derived from monkey glands. In Vienna, according to Richard Ellman, a hundred teachers and university professors submitted to the operation, one of them being Sigmund Freud in 1923. This is the same operation performed on W. B. Yeats by the surgeon Norman Haire in April 1934.9 Conan Doyle was a well-informed man and, of course, a physician, and it is a good bet that in 1923 news of Steinach’s treatment for flagging potency, and the monkey-gland rumour that came with it, became ingredients for the monkey-business plot of the tale he wrote about a professor desperate to recover the vigour of his youth. As Conan Doyle broke down and transformed the material inherited from Stevenson, the monkey-gland story, with its disturbing and prurient overtones, was one of the new elements he introduced to the mix, where it grafted easily onto the simian appearance of Dr Jekyll’s alter ego. Meanwhile in making a desire to recover youth the main motive of his story, Conan Doyle was picking up a definite, if neglected, strand in Dr Jekyll, where all the men are ponderous and middle-aged but Hyde, ‘that young man’ (JH, p. 16) in whose
shape and senses Jekyll ‘felt younger, lighter, happier in body’ (JH, p. 54).

Though it is developed in the laboratory, Stevenson gives no information about the ‘salt’ that brings out Mr Hyde from within Dr Jekyll. For the purpose of the story it might as well be a magic potion. Its results, however, are no laughing matter. Our first glimpse of Hyde sees him trample a child in the street, an astonishingly disturbing moment. ‘The trampling scene is perhaps a convention,’ as Gerard Manley Hopkins guessed; ‘he was thinking of something unsuitable for fiction.’ Hyde is a sadist, and worse. Later he commits an unmotivated and brutal murder. Criminal, savage, animal, and wicked, ‘a soul boiling with causeless hatreds’ (JH, p. 65), he is associated with a Gothic vocabulary of extremism, darkness and atavism, and his uncontrollable energy can only be mastered by the suicide of his host.

In Conan Doyle’s strange case, however, the transformations of the scientist are remarkably trivial by contrast. In fact ‘The Creeping Man’ tends to set its face against the inherent horror of its story of a man motivated by sexual desire and transformed into a beast. To put this another way, ‘The Creeping Man’ seems concerned to draw the teeth of its Stevensonian precursor, to degothicise it, and offer a new version of the story in which, though a grotesque and mysterious transformation does take place, no crime follows and no real harm is done.

Late one night, Presbury’s secretary is alarmed to see the Professor scuttle along the corridor on hands and feet. His other actions, when under the influence of the drug, are unsettling but relatively harmless. One moonlit night, he uses a creeper to climb from the garden to his daughter’s bedroom window, and peers inside for some twenty seconds, one hand raised as if to push up the window, while she lies in her bed paralyzed with fright. The creeping man creepily climbs up a creeper, to watch his daughter in bed – a strange case indeed, but the girl, though scared, is not hurt.
The professor’s antics might be construed in various ways, as the actions of a voyeur, a lover in a bedroom farce, a harbourer of incestuous desires, a predatory vampire like the wall-creeping Dracula, or simply a lunatic. None of these alarming explanations is entertained by either Holmes or Watson, and neither seems inclined to see the Professor’s behaviour as truly dangerous. They regard it, prosaically, as little more than a prank. Watson later sees Presbury in the garden, under the influence of the monkey serum, ‘climbing apparently in mere joy at his own powers, with no definite object in view’ (CB, p. 67), like a boy at play, and Holmes too says he believes ‘it was a mere chance [...] that the pastime brought him to the young lady’s window’ (CB, p. 71). The innocent analogue to Hyde’s unmotivated acts of violence, Professor Presbury’s monkey business is indulged for its own sake, as Holmes explains it. He regards the Professor’s appearance at his daughter’s bedroom window as no more than an accidental consequence of his pursuit of the quintessentially, and innocently, boyish pastime of climbing things. Also boyish, no doubt, is Presbury’s enjoyment of another night-time escapade, taunting his own dog, a wolfhound named Roy that is chained up in the garden. He teases the animal, trying to provoke it in every possible way, throwing pebbles in the dog’s face, prodding it with a stick, and flicking his hands about in front of its mouth. To Watson’s observation he is an ‘impassive and still dignified figure crouching frog-like upon the ground’, goading the dog ‘by all manner of ingenious and calculated cruelty’ (CB, p. 68). This is unpleasant, but hardly satanic.

The triviality of these misdemeanours, compared with the brutal crimes of Hyde, seems to be in line with Presbury’s manifestly selfish and foolish motives for taking the drug, when compared to the altruistic and humanitarian – and Frankensteinian – motivation of Henry Jekyll. Professor Presbury’s comeuppance, too, is less radical that Dr Jekyll’s. The wolfhound slips its collar and attacks him, causing serious injury but not death. Holmes
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will write to Prague to put a stop to this mail-order drug trade, and Presbury’s foolishness will be hushed up to avoid scandal; he must learn to be his age. It is as if the Conan Doyle story is intent on denying and closing down the disturbing implications of the situation it inherited from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. A predictable, orderly existence is firmly restored in Holmes’s last words. ‘There is an early train to town, Watson, but I think we shall just have time for a cup of tea at the ‘Chequers’ before we catch it’ (CB, p. 71). This triumphant bourgeois equilibrium closes the story and with it, as Conan Doyle seems to have intended it at the time, the career of Sherlock Holmes.

The transtextual relation between ‘The Creeping Man’ and *Dr Jekyll* might be characterised, then, as one of what Genette called ‘thematic transformation’, in this case in the form of containment. The tragedy of Dr Jekyll is repeated, not exactly as farce, but as a grotesque curiosity, with elements of comedy. The story of the raging of the beast within a man is processed to be read as a tale about a man who makes a fool of himself by capering about like a monkey. There is containment in a topographical sense too: the terrifying Edward Hyde freely prowls the dark streets of London, where his worst crimes are committed, while the activities of Professor Presbury are confined to his own house and garden in a quiet university town. Before turning to consider the motivation for this metamorphosis, it should be noted that, as we are used to finding in cases of repression, there are places where the buried resonance of the disturbing material sticks up awkwardly through the more bland surface of the treatment. One such is found in the opening paragraph of Watson’s narrative. There he says that, certain unspecified obstacles having now been removed, he has at last obtained permission to publish the singular facts connected with Professor Presbury, ‘if only to dispel once for all the ugly rumours which some twenty years ago agitated the University and were echoed in the learned societies of London’ (CB, p. 50). While this may recall the important role
of rumour and professional reputation in *Dr Jekyll*, it also raises the question of what these rumours about Presbury may have been. If suspicions about what he did are to be dispelled by the news that he took a love potion and started behaving like a monkey, the rumours must have been of something more damaging and ugly. Watson as chronicler opens this possibility but gives no more information about it. He does, however, go on to hint that even now full disclosure is not possible, and ‘a certain reticence and discretion have to be observed in laying the matter before the public’ (CB, p. 50). Whatever more unpleasant or discreditable elements Presbury’s actions may have contained, Watson announces from the outset that he is going to erase them from his account.

How to explain the way Conan Doyle engages with the Stevenson story in an almost provocative way, yet seems intent on dulling its dark resonance, and disarming its central theme, with such determination? *Dr Jekyll* is a hard act to follow, and Conan Doyle’s is not the only hommage which seems pale beside its full-blooded original. To be sure, there are sixty Sherlock Holmes narratives and their author must be allowed a few less successful ones. His admiration for Stevenson was unquestionable, and this tale is no doubt a sincere form of flattery. But it may also be at some level a repudiation of the dark intent of the story of Dr Jekyll, a reparation of the theme so as to render it less nightmarish, suffusing it with the reassuring light of day that usually (not always) shines in the world of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson. There is selfishness and cruelty in that world, but these things can always be challenged and defeated.

Holmes does not encounter, and probably could not deal with, the kind of metaphysical evil that Stevenson could imagine. Jekyll comes to think of Hyde, ‘for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic’ (JH, p. 65). Such an entity is not recognised in Baker Street. ‘This agency stands flat-footed upon the ground,’ Holmes reminds Watson in ‘The Sussex Vampire’,
‘and there it must remain’ (CB, p. 73). This is an important reassurance, given in 1924, that Conan Doyle intended to keep his Spiritualist interests and beliefs out of the Holmes stories. But as a matter of fact, if the evil embodied in Hyde could have no place in the world of Sherlock Holmes, it was just as incompatible with the Spiritualist worldview to which Conan Doyle had been committed for years. His quarrel with the churches had begun at school at Stonyhurst, where he rebelled against the strict regime of the Jesuits who had ‘no trust in human nature’.14 There is no doubt that he was drawn to Spiritualism partly because he found congenial its thoroughly benign view of the nature of God and man. The doctrine of original sin was mistaken. ‘Man is not naturally bad. The average human being is good.’15 Conan Doyle’s spirit advisors had assured him that ‘the average human being goes to heaven’.16 In Stevenson’s story, Hyde, once released, can never be escaped. But Conan Doyle’s faith told him that no mistake was irrecoverable. In Spiritualist belief, the soul is not punished, though it may have to be re-educated. There are many afterworlds, but there is no hell.

The transgression and tragedy of Henry Jekyll inspired in Conan Doyle a story about the misdemeanours and pranks of Professor Presbury. While ‘The Creeping Man’ doesn’t measure up to Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, it does not rank very highly either among the Holmes stories. It appears to have been written at a low creative ebb. One curious proof of this is the story’s susceptibility to intertextual infiltration, as if it were an infirm patient with a heightened liability to infection. An inspection of the many transtextual presences in the tale can tell us a good deal about Conan Doyle’s intellectual resources, while at the same time confirming the sense that in the undergrowth of ‘The Creeping Man’ there lurk further dark and unacknowledged potentialities.

Apart from the major presence of Dr Jekyll, and the rest of the Holmes canon, a cluster of other tales crowd into ‘The Creeping
Man’. Presbury at his daughter’s bedroom window under moonlight recalls Bram Stoker’s Dracula stalking Lucy Western, or crawling down his castle wall on a hunting expedition. ‘With his dressing-gown flapping on each side of him,’ thinks Watson, Presbury ‘looked like some huge bat glued against the side of his own house’ (CB, p. 67). But his boyish curiosity also owes something to Conan Doyle’s sometime collaborator J. M. Barrie, whose Peter Pan hovered at Wendy Darling’s window – the boy who didn’t want to grow old. As well as sharing an enjoyment of gazing into other people’s bedrooms, Presbury is linked to Pan in his unwillingness to accept the natural consequences of ageing and (when under the influence of the drug) his anarchic mischief-making. Another narcissist who refuses to age is Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Gray, and like Presbury he leads a double life and appears to get his drugs from the East End.\(^\text{17}\) As already noted, a physiologist in love with a younger woman had appeared in Conan Doyle’s own ‘The Physiologist’s Wife’ (1890), a story that ends badly. The irascible scientist ejecting the investigating Holmes from his house replays the ejection of the investigative journalist Edward Malone from Professor Challenger’s home early in \textit{The Lost World} (1912), and the great hound which tries to tear out the throat of Presbury has its own giant precedent in \textit{The Hound of the Baskervilles} (1902).\(^\text{18}\) No doubt other interloping stories have their way with this tale, making an opportunistic appearance but little consequential impact.

A more important part of the picture helps to account for the odd lack of mindfulness of ‘The Creeping Man’, as well as the way it drains its Stevensonian model of problem and tragedy, of what Auerbach called ‘background’.\(^\text{19}\) As has been noted, the reason Conan Doyle thought this might well be his last Sherlock Holmes story was his belief that his work for the Spiritualist movement and revelation must take priority over fiction. This tale has a belated feeling. But it also has a rather unexpected conclusion.

Holmes sums up, as he often does, saying the case arose
from the Professor’s idea that he could only gain his wish by turning himself into a younger man. ‘When one tries to rise above nature one is liable to fall below it. The highest type of man may revert to the animal if he leaves the straight road of destiny’ (CB, p. 70). This is a moral that could conceivably be drawn from *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. But what Holmes says next is pure Conan Doyle. With Lowenstein stopped:

we will have no more trouble. But it may recur. Others may find a better way. There is a danger there – a very real danger to humanity. Consider, Watson, that the material, the sensual, the worldly would all prolong their worthless lives. The spiritual would not avoid the call to something higher. It would be the survival of the least fit. What sort of cesspool may not our poor world become? (CB, p. 70.)

These are surprising, and surprisingly strong, words. Science, Holmes is saying, might interfere with human progress, ‘the straight road of destiny’ which ought to be tending upwards from the anthropoid to the angels, and contribute instead to a triumph of materialism. If science finds a way to prolong human life, the most worldly and egotistical will avail themselves of it, while the more spiritual, having less of a stake in the material world, will not be tempted to linger in this life. The implication is that the spiritual are the most fit for survival, and the material, the sensual and the worldly the least fit. (This was the conclusion of Conan Doyle’s reconciliation between science and Spiritualism.) But science may find ways of reversing this bias of nature, serving and prolonging the life of the body at the expense of the life of the spirit, increasing the stock of worldliness and materialism in the world and imperilling mankind’s spiritual destiny. So the tale is both another triumph for material methods – Holmes’s detective protocols and his ‘science of deduction’ – and a dire warning against the prospect of an irresponsible materialist sci-
ence upsetting the Spiritual telos. Professor Presbury’s quest is seen as entirely ignoble, symptomatic of a low selfishness. The drug – which Holmes is now speaking of as an elixir of life rather than a simple aphrodisiac – promises him a self-indulgent juvenescence, but represents a threat to the order of both nature and providence, the progress of history and the progress of the spirit.

With these words of Holmes, then, the case is radically altered. After assiduously lowering the stakes of its Dr Jekyll hypotext, here ‘The Creeping Man’ abruptly raises them again, and an unexpected but actually world-historical theme is revealed. Suddenly, this tale about science going wrong is after all at least as portentous as Dr Jekyll, Frankenstein and Doctor Faustus. Holmes’s teleological musings, so oddly inconsistent with the rest of the tale, can be understood in the context of Conan Doyle’s thinking and writing at this time, increasingly dominated by what he saw as his Spiritualist mission. He was increasingly impatient with a modernity given over to materialism that had not heeded the new revelation of Spiritualism. The ‘real danger to humanity’ posed by unbridled materialism was to be found in the Kaiser’s Germany, prophesied here in 1903 by Sherlock Holmes, but already in the past for Conan Doyle and his readers in 1923. He had recently given his opinion that the single cause of the cataclysmic Great War was ‘the organised materialism of Germany’. The Kaiser’s greed for power and wealth, and Professor Presbury’s greed for youth, were symptoms of the same thing, and the consequence of both threatened to lead the world towards what Herbert Spencer had called re-barbarization.

Such concerns are entirely absent from, and foreign to, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. Further, in the Stevenson tale there is no character who speaks with anything like the authority bestowed on Holmes in ‘The Creeping Man’, and built up over the whole canon of the Sherlock Holmes stories. In the hierarchy of discourses comprising a Sherlock Holmes story, the detective’s own judgements are specially privileged. But the form of Dr Jekyll,
with its doublings-back, its blind spots, and its multiple and partial witnesses, seems designed to make such a conclusive pronouncement inconceivable: after Jekyll lays down his pen the tale, you might say, remains strange to itself. In Conan Doyle’s hands its hypertextual offspring, conceived as the last case of Sherlock Holmes, is first domesticated and stripped of its Gothic affiliations, and then at the last minute recruited as a cautionary story in its author’s campaign for the spiritualization of modernity. It was a strange transformation of Stevenson’s fine bogey tale.

Conan Doyle had been careful to keep his Spiritualist ideas out of the Sherlock Holmes stories. The end of ‘The Creeping Man’ is the point where they come nearest to convergence. It is probably also the point where the case of Professor Presbury story is most estranged from its Stevensonian parent.

NOTES

1 Arthur Conan Doyle, ‘The Creeping Man’ in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. by W. W. Robson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 50-71, p. 50. Henceforth cited in the text as CB. It is a curiosity that September 1903, when these events are supposed to take place, was the month of publication of ‘The Adventure of the Empty House’, in which it is revealed that Sherlock Holmes survived the Reichenbach Falls. *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* itself was published in 1886, a year before the first appearance of Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet*, in Beaton’s Christmas Annual of 1887.

2 See editor’s note p. 70 (CB, p. 249).


5 Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), p. 260. ‘Spirit’ was never a casual word for Conan Doyle, who was pleased to note that Stevenson shared his interest in psychic research.

7 In this resembling the hands of Edward Hyde, ‘lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair’. (JH, p. 58) ‘Always look at the hands first, Watson,’ says Holmes (CB, p. 7).

8 ‘Alice’ suggests youth and purity. Conan Doyle gave the pseudonym Alice to one of the young girls who photographed the Cottingley fairies; his ‘The Cottingley Fairies: An Epilogue’ appeared in *The Strand* in February 1923, the month before ‘The Creeping Man’. ‘Morphy’ is Irish, suggesting the wild and passionate nature Conan Doyle ascribed to a Celtic ethnicity. In his story ‘A Physiologist’s Wife’ of 1890, the passionate widow, married to a staid scientist who is unable to control her, is called Mrs O’James. See Arthur Conan Doyle, *Round the Red Lamp*, 2nd edn. (London: Methuen, 1894), pp. 108-38.


11 Holmes dismisses Bennett’s suggestion that the connection between insanity and the phases of the moon might be relevant to the case (CB, p. 59).

12 Asked for his explanation of Presbury’s quadripedalism, Watson suggests lumbago (CB, p. 56).


Stoker and Barrie were friends of Conan Doyle, and he also knew and admired Oscar Wilde, having met him at the famous dinner where *Dorian Gray* and *The Sign of Four* were commissioned by J. M. Stoddart for *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*.

Holmes tells Watson he was first attracted to the case because of the unexpected behaviour of the dog. ‘Why does Professor Presbury’s faithful wolf-hound, Roy, endeavour to attack him?’ (CB, p. 52). Holmes says he is contemplating a small monograph upon the use of dogs in the work of the detective. Presumably it would include a chapter on the curious incident of the dog in the night-time, from the story ‘Silver Blaze’ (1892).


His activities in the months surrounding the publication of ‘the Creeping Man’ (March 1923) include the first communications from his spirit guide Pheneas (December 1922), the publication of *The Case for Spirit Photography* (London: Hutchinson, December 1922), an address on ‘Psychic Photography’ before the London Spiritualist Alliance (January 1923), the publication of ‘The Cottingley Fairies: An Epilogue’ (February 1923), two public lectures on ‘The New Revelation’ (February 1923), and the start of an exhausting tour (March to August 1923) in which he lectured on Spiritualism in some twenty cities in the United States and Canada.

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Vital Message* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), p. 19. Nor did he believe the Allies who opposed Germany in the war were innocent of a similar materialism. ‘The system which left seven million dead upon the fields of Europe must be rotten to the core’ – Arthur Conan Doyle, *The British Campaign in France and Flanders, vi: July-November 1918* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p. 169.

Herbert Spencer, ‘Re-barbarization’, *Facts and Comments* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1902), pp. 122-33. A tendency of apparently advanced nations to revert to incivility, robbery and violence, which Spencer called re-barbarization, was a theme not unknown to Stevenson, especially in his South Seas work.