

Location, Setting and Spatial Design:

The Construction of Space in the Sherlock Holmes Short Stories and its Significance in the Narrative

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"How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?"¹

Sherlock Holmes' modus operandi is to evolve a theory which suits the facts as presented by the crime in question, instead of fitting facts to a preconceived theory. In other words, the facts precede the theory and not vice versa. The official police are often accused of having a lack of imaginative ability. Although this sounds fanciful as far as crime solving is concerned, Holmes' imagination is essentially of a very systematic nature and is complemented by a fascinating deductive capacity. This combination enables him to observe and not just see, giving him the edge that the officials lack. This paper attempts to show how Sir Arthur Conan Doyle constructs the narrative space conducive to the working of this systematized imagination, thereby enabling Holmes to solve the crime in question. It tries to analyze and study how the creation of the material space by the author, both interior and exterior, is integral to the solution. Holmes minutely studies this space, the crime scene as well as its positioning, to arrive at the facts, which, however improbable, are crucial links to the truth, once the extraneous details are eliminated.