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Exquisite Clutter: Material Culture and the Scottish Reinvention of the Adventure Narrative

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EXQUISITE CLUTTER:
MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE SCOTTISH REINVENTION OF THE
ADVENTURE NARRATIVE

BY
REBEKAH C. GREENE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION
OF
REBEKAH C. GREENE

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ABSTRACT

EXQUISITE CLUTTER:

MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE SCOTTISH REINVENTION OF THE ADVENTURE NARRATIVE

BY

REBEKAH C. GREENE

Exquisite Clutter examines the depiction of material culture in adventures written by Scottish authors Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and John Buchan. Throughout, these three authors use depictions of material culture in the adventure novel to begin formulating a critique about the danger of becoming overly comfortable in a culture where commodities are widely available. In these works, objects are a way to examine the complexities of character and to more closely scrutinize a host of personal anxieties about contact with others, changing societal roles, and one's own place in the world. Considering two of the most important contributions of Calvinism, Calvinistic materialism and interiority, to the formation of Scottish identity in the nineteenth century traces connections between the object, the individual, and the community. Calvinistic materialism highlights the fact that objects can provide comfort and show one's position in society but can also distract the individual from adequately fulfilling their role in a greater community. Developing the skills of introspective thought, or what I refer to as interiority, becomes crucial for these adventurous heroes as they grapple with the object, what it signifies, and the many anxieties that the object reflects that emerge during this process.

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DEDICATION

For those who taught me from the beginning that reading was an adventure

My grandparents

Evelyn Greene (1920-2009)

Thomas Greene (1918-2002)

Bertha Wilhelmina Kleindt Troicke (1924-1989)

My uncle

Donald L. Greene (1961-2012)

and

My father

Robert T. Greene (1947-2011)

who held this opinion more strongly than all of the others put together

PREFACE TO
EXQUISITE CLUTTER:
MATERIAL CULTURE AND THE SCOTTISH REINVENTION OF THE
ADVENTURE NARRATIVE

Exquisite Clutter: Material Culture and the Scottish Reinvention of the Adventure Narrative positions adventure literature as an able but oft overlooked contributor in the continuing scholarly discussion of the Victorians and their preoccupation with material culture. With their introduction of introspection and concerns about material culture and its many implications, Scottish authors revitalized the adventure genre. This dissertation surveys the way that Scottish authors drew upon the rich religio-political history of their nation to draw attention to the object as a repository of personal and cultural signifiers, rather than instead using the adventure to celebrate material culture and its acquisition. Looking at texts by Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and John Buchan that range from the canonical (*Treasure Island* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*) to the lesser-known (“That Little Wrong Box”), I argue that the object as presented in these works can be read as a distraction from the vital work of self-assessment, the development of interiority, and learning how to negotiate the interstice between individuality and community.

My dissertation more closely examines the descriptive use of objects in adventure literature. Adventure was an exceptionally popular genre among readers and was readily available in both inexpensive periodical and single volume form.

Adventure also had the ability to cut across age, gender, and class boundaries¹.

The well-described object in the adventure can be seductive to narrator and reader alike but is dangerously distracting from the important tasks of getting to know more about the self and others. In sum, the adventure is complex, offering glimpses of insight into cultural anxieties about objects and their potential use and/or abuse. The works that I examine are but a small indicator of some of the evolving ways that the Scottish authors working within this field attempted to use ideas closely associated with Calvinism to come to terms with a rapidly expanding material culture² and the anxieties within that objects bring to the surface.

Previous scholars of adventure have not yet scrutinized the important role that Scottish religio-political history, interiority, and Calvinistic materialism had upon the formation of late nineteenth-century adventure and the ways that objects were depicted and described in these texts. The three authors that I survey in this work use depictions of objects that are fashioned with ideas and attitudes drawn from the blend of Scottish heritage and Calvinistic materialism. For the narrators of Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Buchan's works, the homely object is important,

¹ The Stevenson family circle was both delighted and chagrined by news (relayed by John Singer Sargent) that Prime Minister W.E. Gladstone had read and enjoyed *Treasure Island* (Mehew 231). Other examples of dedicated readership can be found in J.M. Barrie's *Margaret Ogilvy*, wherein he describes his working class mother's enjoyment of Stevenson's works (especially *Kidnapped*) during her occasional breaks from housework and other tasks.

² Material culture in this project refers to the description of physical objects. For the most part, these objects are manufactured goods made by humans, although there are also some goods from the natural world (such as Billy Bones' seashells or Medina's animal trophies) that have taken on primarily decorative purposes. These objects are of interest primarily because of what they signify about anxiety and how they function in the training of interiority. Interestingly, most of these objects are cut off from participation in a formalized exchange system. They can, however, be used or repurposed to achieve specific ends.

something that provides both comfort and anxiety, can be read or misread as a powerful signifier, and ultimately proves just as challenging to interpret as the characters of other men. The adventure in these texts rests in trying to develop interpretative skills, seeing and observing just what objects mean, both to others and ourselves³.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SCOTTISH THOUGHT

Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Buchan all shared a common interest in looking at the ways that Scottish interests and values influenced a new sense of a unified British identity that coalesced under the long reign of Queen Victoria. While their adventures do not all feature Scottish heroes, the British heroes that these particular authors celebrate all have values firmly rooted in Calvinist traditions which became permanently affixed to Scottish cultural beliefs, especially among the professional classes. Calvinist values and a rich work ethic aided the survival of both Scottish culture as a whole and the continuance of a long-standing Scottish writing and publishing history. Training in Scottish literary traditions aided these authors in productively harnessing a fusion of imagination and fantasy in their works of adventure⁴. Techniques used to revitalize this genre included the development of interiority and the thorough consideration of objects as repositories of knowledge for both the self and the community. In doing so, these authors carve out space for a new lesson, one that privileges the examination

³ The objects in these adventures highlight an increased attention to the mental processes associated with adventure that I suggest begins with Stevenson's work.

⁴ While none of the three remained in Scotland after they had achieved modicums of professional success, they all remained firmly invested in the practice of considering Scottish identity.

of objects and what they reflect about both beholder and user. Additionally, these authors draw from aspects of Scottish identity and Calvinism to, in this genre, celebrate a well-governed, responsible individual capable of careful, studied observations of objects and people alike. These Scottish authors trace connections between the object, the individual, and the community that eventually connect in a suggestion that while objects can provide comfort and show one's position in society, they can distract the individual from adequately fulfilling their role in a greater community. Knowing oneself and one's neighbors is ultimately more important than knowing the object.

Yet objects can signify comfort and stability at the same time they threaten their beholders. Throughout, these three authors use depictions of material culture in the adventure novel to begin formulating a critique about the danger of becoming complacently comfortable in a culture where commodities are widely available. In Scotland itself the further development of trade helped to provide a sense of stability and vigor that had been on the verge of becoming lost during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In these works, objects are a way to examine the complexities of character and to more closely scrutinize a host of personal anxieties about contact with others, changing societal roles, and one's own place in the world. Indeed, the anxiety of the "wandering Scot," to use Buchan's term⁵, finds its strongest manifestations when the heroes of adventure encounter strange objects and stranger people. Developing the skills of introspective thought, or what I refer to as interiority, becomes crucial for these

⁵ See *Greenmantle* (Macdonald 24).

adventurous heroes as they grapple with the object, what it signifies, and the many anxieties that the object reflects that emerge during this process.

In offering lessons as to how to deal with both objects and the anxieties that they reflect and reveal in the adventure, post-*Treasure Island*, these authors draw from their shared awareness of the importance of Scottish identity and its long-standing attitudes regarding self-governance, community (especially in clan and familial relations), careful stewardship of resources, and a sense of self-exile even while belonging to a larger whole. These authors ultimately resituated the adventure, moving it from a religiously moralistic genre celebrating the physical and spiritual achievements of the (generally English) individual to a more secular one that instead celebrates the commerce-driven community and the individual's ability to now negotiate the many anxieties that such a community conceals. While the community that these heroes find themselves a part of is commerce-driven, these heroes are not, as evidenced by their consistent downplaying of objects that they observe. For these heroes, interiority and imagination are more important than rampant, showy consumerism. Drawing from Calvinist ideas about material culture, these authors develop a way to navigate through the clutter of objects, privileging ones that are of use rather than those selected for mere showy display.

THE PATH TOWARD ADVENTURE

For me, one of the most interesting aspects of adventure is the fact that it is a relatively flexible genre, one that cannot be fully restrained in novels. The characteristics of adventure resurface in epic poetry, in short stories, and even in drama. Stevenson, Andrew Lang, and Rider Haggard all referred to the form in their critical writings as "adventure romance," suggestive of the fact that the form

is a successor to the medieval epic romance tradition⁶. This fluidity makes it hard to concretely state just what makes up an adventure. During the time period surveyed by this project (roughly 1880-1925), publications billed as adventure romance by publishers including Thomas Nelson and Son or Hoddard and Stoughton, for example, included novels and stories set at sea or in army barracks; tales of suspense, fear, mystery, and derring-do (later succeeded by pulp magazines geared towards horror); robinsonades featuring castaways overcoming great odds; prototypical westerns that could be set in the American West, Mexico, Canada, or the Australian outback; narratives emphasizing the dangers of the jungle and encounters with “uncivilized” (or non-white) people set in Africa, India, or the South Seas; and finally, the so-called Ruritanian romances illustrating heroics at the highest levels of foreign governments.

In looking at these different forms, I see the characteristics of adventure as including intense physical activity, an outdoors setting (popular locations include the forest, the wilderness, islands, and aboard ships), pursuit of some type of greater material gain, and a hero both hunted (by wild animals and by his fellow man) and haunted by the choices that he has or has not made. The adventure hero typically has pre-existing skills gained by hard work and by profuse reading. The hardships that he endures force him to reevaluate his relationship with God and with his fellow man. In learning how to reassess both his skills and his relationships, he learns more about himself, safely and skillfully navigating both confidence and self-doubt. Whether or not he chooses to return to civilization, the

⁶ All three men were very familiar with medieval romances, including Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*.

process of adventure typically serves as both a restorative and a corrective for the adventurous individual.

I propose that there are four fascinating deviations from these general characteristics that occur within the Scottish reinvention of adventure that began in 1880 with the serialization of Stevenson's *Treasure Island* in *Young Folks* magazine. First and foremost, Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Buchan tend to mention religion only slightly in these works (mentioning divine providence, for example, in *Kidnapped* or referring to religious paraphernalia such as rosaries in "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons") or outright neglect religion in their narratives in favor of a more secular reliance on the powers of interiority and imagination. Yet at the same time, the self-reliance of their narrative heroes and the comforts these heroes take in connection with the distinctive traits of Calvinistic materialism (which I shall return to shortly) all hint at strong religious undertones lingering just below the surface. These authors also break with tradition, choosing to emphasize interiority, especially when it occurs at the exact same time as moments of extreme physical exertion. Furthermore, they call attention to a closer interrogation of material culture and its significance. Finally, they reclaim the adventure from its status as a genre geared towards younger readers, returning it to a form favored by readers of all levels and ages. (Interestingly, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* was initially marketed to adult readers, but by the 1830s, the genre had begun to be marketed more extensively towards younger readers.) The second and third points I have just mentioned, the increased emphasis of interiority and the closer interrogation of material culture and its significance, are the major differences that I have chosen to investigate within the

confines of this project and what I see as the defining links between this particular grouping of texts⁷.

In the hands of these Scottish authors, the reimagined adventure becomes what Elaine Freedgood has referred to as a “cultural site” (8), one wherein the tensions of material culture and what literary depictions of it signifies can be more thoroughly scrutinized. In pairing texts such as “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,” “The Jew’s Breastplate,” and “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs,” I wanted to examine the tension that exists between mass-produced cultural objects and higher forms of art found in collections, for instance. I also saw objects in Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* operating as tools and instruments that allowed for different ways of viewing others and the self. In selecting texts, I tried to think through the fact that part of what makes the object so ambiguous is the fact that it can have so many different values simultaneously. Economic value is sometimes important but sentimental value, use and adaptability, a relationship to other objects, and even the response of other people to an individual object can all help to build and establish value.

However, one of the biggest paradoxes in dealing with material culture in the Scottish adventure rests in the fact that spiritual value is also tangled up with physical material objects. Calvinistic materialism encourages a thrifty conservation of objects and also produces a system wherein the object may be seen as a symbolic indicator of election (or divine favor) and as a physical manifestation of management skills. Yet the slowly collapsing tension here between the spiritual

⁷ Another more minor deviation that these authors make is to return the adventure to British shores instead of emphasizing exotic distant foreign lands.

and the material is difficult to unravel. Enjoying the comforts that objects can provide within the context of Calvinistic materialism is allowable and indeed, even encouraged as humans sometimes need the material form of objects in order to provoke thought. But there are additional tensions that emerge in relation to the object. For instance, thrift and the conservation of objects (as seen, for example, in Alan Breck Stewart's stewardship of his buttons in *Kidnapped*⁸) is one of the more positive aspects of Calvinistic materialism, but hoarding can also occur. Trying to navigate what makes the object valuable in these adventures can be exceedingly frustrating due to the many tensions, anxieties, and paradoxes that these objects draw attention to, but can ultimately lead to the development of both interiority and an engaged pragmatism in narrative hero and reader alike.

Critics of adventure regularly suggest that these tales, especially in the latter half of the nineteenth century, focus primarily on themes involving the development/retention/expansion of empire and the celebration of the unique individual against great odds. While the Scottish authors I study were resistant to the idea of English heroes fulfilling these tropes, they were very comfortable with British characters advancing these themes. Stevenson's David Balfour, the hero of *Kidnapped*, is, after his education about Highland culture, willing to serve as a unifier between cultures. Conan Doyle's heroes in this sequence of stories also support union and resist perceived threats to the safety of the Empire. By the time John Buchan's Richard Hannay emerges, there are no longer English/Scottish distinctions. All that remains is overcoming the efforts of the individual in

⁸ Interestingly, some early records of the Stuart family name feature the spelling "Steward."

overcoming the threat to the unified British Empire. As part of a burgeoning literature designed for and appreciated by primarily lower-class and lower-middle class readers (Zweig 12), adventure was well-suited for offering encoded lessons on dealing with objects⁹. Yet there has not yet been a serious study of how descriptions of objects function within these works, which is odd, given that the very crux of these narratives generally revolves around specific and valuable things. Frequently, studies of more canonical Victorian literature (e.g. *Middlemarch*, *Cranford*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*) focus on the way that these novels engage with the development of taste, the production of artistic objects in an age of newly emergent mechanical reproduction, or even problems associated with gifts or ownership. Adventure also performs similar work in a lesser known genre. In short, current critical engagement with “thing culture” has opened up a space for a study that takes on the “host of ideas” (Freedgood) associated with the many objects that are embedded within the pages of the adventure.

⁹ John Cawelti, in *Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976) simply defines the “central fantasy of the adventure story [as] that of the hero—individual or group—overcoming obstacles and dangers and accomplishing some important and moral mission. [. . .] The true focus of interest in the adventure story is the character of the hero and the nature of the obstacles he has to overcome” (39-40). Cawelti’s definition of the “central fantasy” strikes me as important, particularly due to his emphasis on “obstacles” which must be overcome in order to “[accomplish] some important and moral mission.” The adventure also frequently reflects, according to Joseph Bristow, an “almost childish delight in the marvellous” (*Adventure Stories* xii), something that I interpret as applicable to the role of the object. The “courage, fortitude, cunning, strength, leadership, and persistence” (Green 23) required by the hero to deal with obstacles and objects alike, adds an additional layer of moral value for the typical reader of adventure.

Paul Zweig's *The Adventurer*, an ample and thoughtful study of the genre, argues that the roots of the adventure go back to classic mythology and that, with each new epoch and major development in society, our ideas of adventure shift. However, one constant remains for Zweig: the adventure story is one that can transport its readers to a place of escape. Additionally, he recognizes the adventure as a valuable one, observing that the values housed within the adventure are "profoundly and precisely antinovelistic: instead of celebrating the patterns of social reality, and the corresponding patterns of individual experience, it celebrates the energies which disrupt the pattern, and the characters who uproot it in themselves" (13). Zweig's assumptions regarding the values of the adventure may be correct for the vast majority of works organized around adventure as a central theme (including novels, short stories, and even dramas such as Scottish writer J.M. Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton*), but the works surveyed in my dissertation disrupt this pattern, showing a much more complicated and nuanced engagement with the problems of the individual and how that individual can conform to "patterns of social reality." The narrators in the novels and short stories I survey desire nothing more than patterns, a feeling of belonging, a sense of comfortable rootedness among familiar, homey objects.

My work challenges critical readings of adventure as a lesser genre, as well as notions that "it was thought not to have value for an intellectually engaged adult mind" (*Adventure Stories* xv)¹⁰. Evaluating the way that objects work within the

¹⁰ As a whole, adventure was disregarded as light entertainment by literary critics as varied as F.R. Leavis, T.S. Eliot, and W.H. Auden. Adventure was particularly disparaged by members of the Bloomsbury Group as well as critics associated with

adventure, I suggest, not only reinvests the genre with value but also offers a glimpse into what adult readers may have initially found so fascinating about these works and the copious descriptions of objects on their pages: the appeal to the imagination as a way to address and overcome very real anxieties about a rapidly changing world. My own project intervenes in the study of adventure by asking how the figurative display of literary material culture within the adventure can be read as an important contribution to developing skills on the part of the narrator and reader alike. Certainly, the adventure drew from and celebrated many of the ideas celebrated with colonialism that frustrated many critics, but the most valuable idea it offered in contrast to colonialism was the encouragement provided to readers to practice careful self-assessment, develop an assessment and appraisal of others, and craft an assessment of the world in general. Ultimately, the adventure as a popular form matters because of the lessons it offered in an appealing way. One does not specifically learn how to use objects. Instead, the reader is invited to speculate and imagine how they would use objects or to think about where objects come from and what they might signify to and about others.

A TURN TOWARD THE OBJECT

The role of the object in adventure literature is a fascinating and frustrating one. My project principally argues that adventure literature exposes a cultural anxiety with objects and the stories that those objects tell about familial and cultural loss, history, and class issues, for instance. The stories that objects tell are

the formalism and American New Critics movements. On the other hand, the Marxist theorist Georg Lukács celebrated the adventure as a genre.

intimately connected to the people who use them¹¹. Robert Louis Stevenson's popular novels, Arthur Conan Doyle's short stories, and John Buchan's thrillers all strike me as dealing with issues relating to objects in ways that address insecurities. These authors worked to create a revival of adventure that gradually shifted the genre from the vague collection and use of a fabulous number of objects to a more deliberative consideration of specifically described objects. These objects pack parlors, libraries, studies, and hallways but generally only stand out when the narrator specifically considers them¹². In examining these objects, each of these writers demonstrates a concern that rather than providing pleasure and comfort objects can instead signify and reflect intense feelings of discomfort.

I decided, in the initial stages of this dissertation, to develop several different categories for investigation, including objects as tools ready for use, tools ready for adaptation, simple keepsakes, more unique collectables, and objects-as-spectacle. Something that intrigued me about the objects ultimately selected for further study was the fact that the objects sometimes fit into multiple categories at

¹¹ For more on the Victorians and their fascination with objects, see Deborah Cohen's *Household Gods: The British and Their Possessions* (2009).

¹² Objects and what they signify reached their ultimate zenith in the Scots diaspora when John Buchan, now Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor-General of Canada, arranged the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to North America in 1939. The pomp and circumstance of this visit, along with the careful coordination and distribution of many specially made commemorative objects, not only celebrated and highlighted the importance of the British Empire, but was also meant to further goodwill and a renewed interest in forging stronger Anglo-American relations.

the same time. In Stevenson's work, for example, I saw multiple examples of sea-chests and portmanteaus or objects within objects. Both *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* included objects doubling up as tools and keepsakes at the same time. (The description of objects found in pockets in both Conan Doyle and Buchan's work include similar features to the Stevensonian assemblage.) Breaking these assortments down led me to think more concretely about the tension between specificity and vagueness. Specific items began to stand out, demanding attention: crutches, sea shells, silver buttons, and coats. Thinking more about the idea of categorization while sorting through the word-hoards of objects that permeate so many Victorian triple-deckers brought Conan Doyle's short stories into closer view, highlighting the distinctions between private and public collections as well as the various anxieties that mass produced objects can remind us of. Finally, Buchan's Hannay novels provided many examples of objects-as-spectacle, carefully arranged and displayed en masse in order to provide a narrative to their viewer. Combined, all of these objects were of interest because of their unresolved contradictions. These objects all seem to celebrate mass possession while at the same time suggesting that the object's owners and beholders are capable of a more refined aesthetic taste. Throughout, an undisclosed religious undercurrent permeates these objects on display. In each of the texts that I examine within the scope of this study the narrative heroes are interested in the object but simultaneously shy away from it, recognizing the ambiguities of the object as both delightful and dangerous. The objects in these works illustrate some of the neat paradoxes of Calvinistic materialism. Objects should be displayed as a signal of one's status as part of the elect but should not be overly admired for fear of

covetousness, possible hoarding, or the incredibly dangerous distraction of outright ignoring other people.

In surveying this particular grouping of adventures, I find myself working with narrators who are continually recognizing the fact that they cannot completely appraise and appreciate either the items around them or the people who own and use those items. They also struggle with recognizing their own thought processes due to their stressful surroundings and untreated traumas. The items surveyed here require interaction with other objects or with the narrator's interiority in order to produce some sort of relationality that highlights their significance. And yet this meaning remains obscured, at all times, by the interiority of the item's beholder. What is most important in this interaction, I propose, isn't the item that's being beheld but the thought process that goes into the act of beholding. Objects may delight or endanger but are ultimately mere distractions¹³. Using the term "object" to describe the vast quantity of items surveyed in these adventures adds the tiniest form of organizational control over the clutter that populates the adventure. We tend to rely on objects, but what makes these particular object encounters in the adventure interesting is the way that these narrators start to recognize and overcome this reliance.

I suggest that the heroes of these works, instead of taking things for granted, think intensely about objects they don't have, especially when those objects belong to others, or when these heroes are under significant stress. Otherwise, items, stuff, thingamajigs, or the term I prefer, objects, are simply used

¹³ Only a few of these objects verge on becoming things, such as Long John Silver's crutch.

without much thought whenever they're at hand. When objects are available in the space of the adventure they may distract from more important tasks but they typically result in an intense episode of self-consciousness. The material object proves to not be the most important part of the adventures surveyed within my project; rather, it is the careful development of practices of thought and their continued usage in a development of the self. Flattening distinctions allows for a fuller concentration on the self and a role within the community.

Just as there has been a resurgence of interest in examining the object in philosophy, as demonstrated by the recent emergence of the object-oriented ontology movement, so, too, within Victorian studies, where a recent uptick in critical interest of material culture has seen interesting examinations of the Victorians and their relations to and with the object emerging in studies such as Elaine Freedgood's *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*. Part of this attraction to Victorian material culture stems from what Freedgood has identified as the

host of ideas [that] resided in Victorian things: abstraction, alienation, and spectacularization had to compete for space with other kinds of object relations—ones that we have perhaps yet to appreciate. Commodity culture happened slowly: it was preceded by, I will argue, and was for a long time survived by what I call Victorian “thing culture”: a more extravagant form of object relations than ours, one in which systems of value were not quarantined from one another and ideas of interest and meaning were perhaps far less restricted than they are for us. Thing culture survives now in those marginal or de-based cultural forms and practices in which apparently mundane or meaningless objects can suddenly take on or be assigned value and meaning: the flea market, the detective story, the lottery, the romantic comedy—in short, in a cultural site in which a found object can be convincingly stripped of randomness. (8)

While I concur with Freedgood's general assessment, for me the field of adventure is an as of yet unexplored “cultural site” wherein “systems of value” are at play.

The newly revitalized adventure subgenre (post-*Treasure Island*), particularly with its intricate interrogation of objects, mediates a space of anxiety and alienation. Objects and the cultural response to them reflect concerns about meanings and values but also the anxiety of the beholder, especially about domestic situations that have been ruptured due to death, politics, or financial problems. Only through the experience of adventure can enough healing occur for the male hero to eventually be able to return to or create a new domestic space. The object encountered during adventure allows for the hero to better understand how to resolve the situation that initially forced him away from his domestic space.

I see my work as following in the footsteps of those Victorianist scholars who are interested in learning more about “culturally resonant objects” (Plotz xiv) and just what it is that makes these objects worthy of deeper investigation. Elaine Freedgood, for instance, has observed that the many descriptive lists found in many nineteenth century novels function as “shorthand for big cultural formations” (19). Following Freedgood’s advice to pay closer attention to these descriptions when reading, I see objects emerging as repositories of meaning. Like Freedgood and Plotz, I’m interested in learning more about the work that the object performs or instigates. Their work, for me, serves as a departure point to examine the complex dynamics between subject and object and the process of the thought-work required to examine the object inside the adventure.

Combining aspects of the “thing culture” of Freedgood and the Calvinistic materialism so prevalent in Scotland allows for a more thorough scrutiny of the role of the object in the adventure. The description of objects in the adventure, I argue, is a first step in developing a useful self-examination of attitudes and

anxieties about those same objects, as well as other people, society, and the self. I see this work as opening up a range of possibilities, allowing for a discussion of an item or stuff in its own right, instead of as part of some sort of larger system.

While I am very interested in the massive display of goods on display in these novels and short stories and recognize the necessity of understanding what these goods signify for both narrator and reader alike, I distance myself from them, arguing that these objects function as little more than distractions for the heroes of the texts I've included within this project.

An encounter with the object matters because it gives a chance to explore why we think and act and feel the way that we do. Objects prompt our memory, pique our interest, and even stimulate our desire, delight, and need. Thinking more about objects—especially when we can't have ready access, when we don't quite understand what they are, when we've forgotten what exactly it is that we need—can create a pause, a space for reflection. But objects can be tricky, distracting and overwhelming us when we least expect it. These items reflect concerns and anxieties that need to be understood and appreciated, and, in their inclusion, work to remind us of these issues. But to linger with them too long can be dangerous in the space of the adventure, where they are placed as stimulants and distractions both. To concentrate too long on an item or to dangerously fixate upon it can result in a failure to comprehend its many complex relationships or our own. Looking more deeply at these objects with a sense of the ideas of Calvinistic materialism can help one navigate through the treacherous terrain of the adventure.

THE SCOTTISH PROBLEM

While scholars of adventure, especially Martin Green in his introduction to the seminal *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*, have lightly touched upon adventure as an emergent genre post-Union, they have not yet fully explored the importance of Scottish religio-political history upon the genre. In looking at these particular texts, I see a tension regarding national identity. Scottishness itself is, in some ways, especially since the early nineteenth century, hard to clearly define given its sublimation and absorption into a more unified British identity. Scottish nationalists consider themselves part of a colonized nation, yet Scotland significantly contributed both manpower and mercantile aid in the colonial efforts of Empire. This dual idea of Scotland as both colonized and colonizer is a provocative one.

Since the Union, Scotland itself can be (and has indeed been) seen as an object. Scotland's landscape has been extensively marketed since the late 1750s with Highland walking tours, fishing trips, and hunting retreats all designed to appeal to outsiders with leisure and money. Other elements of Scottish identity neatly commoditized in our modern age can be seen in the tartan plaid of Walker's shortbread tins and the Highlander in regimental uniform adorning Dewar's whiskey labels. Perhaps the greatest blending of Scottish identity into a more unified British one was the one performed (and still performed) by the Royal Family. Queen Victoria's deep love of Balmoral and the Highlanders continuously present at her side during the latter years of her reign helped to link Scotland and Scottish identity into a greater overall British identity.

The acceptance and absorption of Scotland and Scottish identity into a United Kingdom and British identity has been, since the nineteenth century, a

sober business proposition necessary to ensure continued survival. The ideas of Scots marketing themselves and the practice of marketing Scotland itself as a commodity have become so commonplace since the Victorian era that the 2014 referendum debate “No” campaign primarily revolved around economic terms. The historical tensions associated with Scotland, Scottishness, and even the hard work, thrift, and industry of so many Scottish citizens in developing industry and empire becomes further complicated when looking more closely at the role these ideas play in the formation of the adventure genre. What is particularly striking about these texts is the fact that the bulk of these works revolve around heroes unconcerned about associations with national identity or politics, instead invested in the idea of a full immersion into a prosperous life as part of a newly emergent middle class. I suggest that these texts all draw upon an engaged pragmatism, or what the Scots themselves refer to as “canniness,” a form of careful, shrewd, caution closely connected with the moderate Calvinistic movements in dealing with objects, other people, and the idea of a unified Britain.

As a grouping, the Scottish raised and trained adventure writers Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and John Buchan¹⁴ share an interest in the

¹⁴ Stevenson was fully Scottish, descended on his father’s side from noted engineers and on his mother’s from ministers. Trained at the University of Edinburgh, he studied both engineering and law. Conan Doyle’s ancestry was Irish Catholic, but he was born and raised in Edinburgh, familiar with many of the Calvinistic ideals and history that had by then permeated all of the strata of Scottish society. Conan Doyle, after a preliminary education in England, later trained in medicine at the University of Edinburgh’s medical school. The last author surveyed in this project, John Buchan (Lord Tweedsmuir) was fully Scottish, and like Stevenson, descended from ministers and also began his collegiate training in Scotland (at the University of Glasgow) before moving to Oxford. The three men all ended up eventually emigrating from Scotland due to personal and professional opportunities. The familial and educational backgrounds

fluidity and stasis of cultural identity and a desire to interrogate notions of imagination, fantasy, and reality. While some of these interests certainly bear similarities to their English contemporaries working within the same field (G.A. Henty or the members of the extended Marryat family circle, for instance), I claim that an awareness of the complexities of navigating life in the Scottish professional classes allowed these authors to make notable developments in the resurgence of the adventure post-1880. These authors used multiple Scottish ideas and traits to transform the adventure from a genre that celebrated the achievements of England and Englishmen to instead celebrating the achievements of individual Britons invested in the success of a greater commercially-based community. An awareness of heritage meant that these authors were cognizant of how the Scots had worked to remember and preserve their language, religious practices and cultural roots, developing an appreciation for mercantile possessions along the way. These authors were interested in reinvigorating the adventure genre with their own knowledge of history, particularly the complicated relations between England and Scotland that culminated in the disaster of the 1745 Uprising led by Charles Stuart (“Bonnie Prince Charlie”). To try to understand this particular selection of authors, a brief consideration of Scottish identity and history and how it aided in the emergence of the British Empire in the nineteenth century is important.

Scottish identity, especially in the nineteenth century, was flexible. While Scotland has always had a strong and independent cultural identity, this was seen as eroding following the Scottish loss at Flodden in 1513. The eventual

of all three authors offer evidence that they were extremely interested in Scottish history and how it could be used to create a more solidified British identity.

establishment of James VI as the English James I was seen by many as the sign of peaceful unification of the two countries but this proved to only be stable in the short run. The emergence of the Covenanters, particularly during 1637-1680, again highlighted the tensions between Scotland and England. The Covenanters, a movement led by Scottish Presbyterians, fiercely resisted Charles I and Archbishop Laud's attempts to change the liturgy to a more episcopal one¹⁵. Their protests expanded and they achieved some military and political prominence during this time period¹⁶. Although the Covenanters were eventually defeated, they continued to remain an important political presence, demanding unique rights and protections for Scottish citizens. Peace and stability may have eventually ended up reigning in England following the Civil War (with the exception of Monmouth's Rebellion), but it was far harder to come by north of the border. Although the Covenanters were eventually defeated, they did still manage to achieve their ultimate goal, a separation of church and state.

Scotland, however, was still on edge, dealing with a multiplicity of issues. Noted cultural upheavals in the eighteenth century including but not limited to the Union of 1707, the Uprisings of 1715 and 1745, and the eradication of Highland identity in the wake of Culloden led to a general feeling of malaise and increased

¹⁵ All three authors surveyed in this project all had intense interests in the history of the Covenanters and their role in the development of Scottish and British identity. For more information, see *The Pentland Rising*, *The Marquess of Montrose*, *Memory Hold-the-Door*, and *Through The Magic Door*.

¹⁶ Histories of the Covenanters typically emphasize the important role that they played in the Stuart king's downfall and emphasize that the Covenanters later forced Charles II to accept their demands to honor the terms of religious separation afforded to them before they agreed to the Treaty of Breda. For more information consult John R. Young, James King Hewison, and David Stevenson.

immigration. Throughout these many difficulties, however, the Presbyterians (now no longer quite as much under the influence of the fiery Covenanters) navigated a more moderate path, one that recognized the importance a Scottish influence on the formation of a more unified British identity (post-Union) could have, particularly for the further development of a professional class.

The moderate Presbyterians, in general, recognized that peace and economic stability in the nation as a whole could expand the reputation of both the country and its citizens. With the attempted return of the Stuarts (the Old and Young Pretenders), the Presbyterians moved to distance themselves from militaristic and political engagement. Heartily disapproving of the Stuart cause, the Presbyterians viewed involvement in the '45 as a waste of money, lives, and the time spent trying to use peaceful methods to expand Scottish commerce. If the Act of Union of 1707 was to succeed, it would only do so as a consolidation that offered opportunity to the English and the Scots alike. Rejecting the Stuart cause (one that was closely allied with both Catholicism and the French) allowed the Presbyterians to build acceptance of a quieter, more staid Scottish citizen, one interested in hard work, thrift, and the possibilities of economic enrichment. Combining heart and head (Brown and Riach 10), the Presbyterians recognized that this version of a quieter, tamer Scot, the contrast to the wild Highlander of so many stereotypes, could serve as a valuable partner to England in advancing now shared (and British) interests around the globe. This middle ground navigated by the moderate Presbyterians of trying to fit in, adapt, and survive is how the Scots finally emerged in a complicated position of both colonized and colonizer, implicit and complicit in the formation of British identity and the empire itself.

Eventually, the stability emphasized by the Presbyterians and their moderate approach to politics and social developments took hold, resulting in the flourishing of commercial trade and the reemergence of a recognition of Scottish universities as strongholds of practical modern education for members of the professional classes. The Presbyterians, drawing upon and further developing their understanding of Calvinistic materialism, did much to further the rebuilding and refurbishment of Scotland as a partner in prosperity. The shaping of a British identity allowed for Scotland (in the wake of the Presbyterians) to rebrand itself as a solid, capable commodity. The unification of cultures, led by the professional classes, increased opportunities for more and more young Scots. As Douglas S. Mack has noted, the stability of peace and prosperity brought additional opportunities for Scots. Taking on opportunities in less fashionable regiments or in the bureaucratic regimes of the East India Company (Mack 5) brought about a chance to gain material rewards. Being plucky, taking chances, and dedicating the self to hard work became positive goals to aspire to and indeed, these are many of the goals found in the adventure. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the young professionals of Scotland began to reclaim their identities as productive, thrifty, useful citizens of Empire. By the nineteenth century, the Scottish professional classes and clerics were intensely engaged in building and expanding Scottish culture as a commodity itself. The full embrace of the uniform British identity first advocated by the moderate Presbyterians began a restorative healing of the two nations. Newfound economic stability began a process that gradually erased many of the divisions that remained in the wake of the 1745 Uprising. This

concerted effort did much to rehabilitate the identity of both Scotland and its citizens and to help forge a British identity¹⁷.

Indeed, Scotland's reputation, by the later part of the nineteenth century, was such that historian Arthur Herman in examining this timeframe could observe that the Scottish had a "reputation for thrift [. . . and a] reputation for hard work, good business sense and fiscal responsibility, and his penchant for success" ("Tobaccomen"). Herman's comments serve as a powerful reminder that by the time Stevenson revitalized the adventure subgenre with the publication of *Treasure Island*, the notion of Scottish industriousness had become something to strive for. With more and more capable young Scots taking roles in just about every single conceivable political, military, commercial, or charitable venture, it became commonplace to think of Scottish competency and administration as a bulwark of the Empire. Scottish values gradually became British values. Later, when Lord Rosebery proclaimed in a 1908 speech on banking that "Scottish pride" and "Scottish thrift" were so "closely intertwined" "that you cannot perhaps separate them" and that "[t]hrift implies care, foresight, tenderness for those dependent on you" (11), he was not only praising his hosts but all Scotsmen. The values of the Presbyterians, and now the Scottish people as a whole, became ones to emulate. The Scots, simply put, knew how to productively manage objects as a result of their rich history.

¹⁷ By the midpoint of the century, the Scots had fully emerged as orderly custodians and administrators of Empire. (Some of the most noted politicians during this time period of rapid expansion were of Scottish descent, including Thomas Macaulay (Scottish father), and the Prime Ministers William Gladstone (fully Scottish but born in England), and Lord Rosebery (a Scottish peer raised mainly in England).

HOMEY OBJECTS AND CALVINISTIC MATERIALISM: THE ADVENTURE OF INTERIORITY

The texts surveyed in this project are well-stocked with commonplace mass-produced and occasionally homey objects that are capable of our interpretation and misinterpretation alike when we bother to pay attention to them. Looking more closely at objects such as crutches, buttons, cheap plaster busts, and bits of embroidery allows a reading of the object as a repository of personal and social values. What's important is the fact that thinking more intensely and inwardly about objects, as well as what they signify and to whom, proves more rewarding than their actual possession. I read interior adventure as both requiring and strengthening mental acumen. Additionally, it requires access to materials that can inform or confirm pre-existing ideas. In general, in the process of adventure interiority is an exploration that is less physically taxing but overall more enriching¹⁸.

While the grouping of adventures that I study in this project generally concentrate on more secular issues, they are still very much informed by both Scottish history and the ideas of Calvinistic materialism and interiority. Interiority, in particular, has a rich, long-standing tradition in Christian thought. While Catholic theologians have an extensive literature on the importance of introspection, it is important to note that the idea also had a key role in other

¹⁸ The robinsonades and the latter "muscular Christianity" inspired narratives of Defoe, Ballantyne, Marryat, and Henty, for instance, all contain brief elements of interiority in the forms of self-reflection or self-assessment but these moments are sacrificed in favor of celebrations of physical skills such as rowing, running, climbing, hand-to-hand combat, sailing, mountain climbing, or conquering the dangers of the landscape.

Western religions as well. Interiority was important in the construction of individual identity during the Renaissance for Catholic philosophers, humanists, and the founders of the major Protestant religions. The rich history of philosophic thought going back to Saint Augustine attempted to theorize the distinctions between inner thought and outer world, but John Calvin and his followers truly expanded the idea of interiority as important for the training and development of powers of reason, taste, judgment and control over the emotions. Early Calvinist interpretations of interiority (especially those developed by the Puritans) attempted to correct thoughts triggered by sensual encounters with the outside world by retreating inward to a reflective space for meditation, but by the nineteenth century discussions of interiority instead centered on the idea that it was a place for experiencing (Campe and Weber 10) and celebrating feeling.

Like both his Catholic contemporaries and predecessors, Calvin believed that meditation and prayer cultivated ways to “enliven and enrich” the mind (Campe and Weber 11). Post-Calvin, the idea of interiority and self-exploration accelerated. By the time of the nineteenth century, Campe and Weber observe that

[t]he concept of the “inner man” quickly became a central metaphor that strongly appealed to contemporary thinkers and carried positive connotations such as “depth,” “truth,” and “experience.” At the same time, interiority became a primarily spatial concept, a new historic development that prompted the modern idea of “interior worlds” (*Innenwelten*). [. . .] And yet interior worlds cannot be imagined without exterior worlds – there is always an ambivalence, if not a paradox that arises. Inner worlds motivate the exploration of an exterior world that had been introduced merely for the purpose of distinction. *The description of interior worlds increasingly necessitates conceptions of the exterior world, and interior worlds are forced to keep renewing and repeating the distinction to preserve their own identity.* (12-13, emphasis mine)

In the world of the adventure the collision between the interior and exterior worlds is all but impossible to avoid. The relationship between the two is frightening as

neither is ever truly fully understood. The ideas of “truth” and “experience” are exciting but, at the same time, fraught with danger. Without a proper training, the interior world can easily collapse. In looking at the ways that the narrators of Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Buchan think about and interact with objects, we see the continued renewal that Campe and Weber gesture towards in their discussion of the interior/exterior distinction. Objects can offer a (generally) safe introduction to the interior adventure of the mind. And yet, in the space of the adventure, the distinction between interior/exterior is not always particularly well marked or distinguishable. For the inner world to function properly there also needs to be a connection to, or at the bare minimum an ability to appreciate, the exterior world.

Considering two of the most important contributions of Calvinism to the formation of Scottish identity in the nineteenth century, namely, the personal development and cultivation of interiority, as well as a particular Calvinistic approach to material culture allows for a new critical approach to adventure. It was perfectly acceptable for a member of the Calvinist religions (including Presbyterianism and the Church of Scotland) to possess comfortable objects at both home and work, as long as charity was being practiced and the unfortunate were being taken care of. The purpose of the object in the dour Calvinist’s possession was twofold: one, to serve as a reminder to both the self and others that the possessor was a member of the elect, favored with God’s grace, and two, to serve as a symbol of one’s personal status as a good and careful steward of resources. While objects in this context could be decorative and could even aid one in feeling more comfortable at home, work, or during travel they were most valuable when they could be used. In this light, the object powerfully served as a

regular reminder to continue applying and developing one's skills in the hopes of bettering the community and securing God's grace. Calvinistic materialism, in sum, is twofold—it rejects an overt consumerist display that *only* celebrates the individual but, simultaneously, allows the individual (fully integrated into the community) to display their status as both a believer and steward. As long as the individual practices charity and stays an active, fruitful member of the community, they can enjoy the comforts objects offer. The narrators of these novels surveyed here must learn how to straddle this divide and how to prove themselves capable of both managing objects and fully participating in the community.

Interiority in the works of these Scottish authors can be read as something that begins to both teach the narrator (and reader alike) about themselves, but about others as well, reconciling the individual to their eventual place within the community. Calvinism may not play an overt part in these works, but the texts selected within the bounds of my project share a similarity in that they hearken back to Calvin's observation that the vanity of the human heart can cause one's self to be duped (Martin 17). Interiority helps us to read ourselves, even while it sometimes simultaneously leads us to misread others and objects. Thinking about objects becomes an acceptable and worthy substitute for the more traditional physical adventure¹⁹. The process of fashioning the self, of going on a quest of the mind, of pursuing interiority, whatever we might like to call it, sounds simple at first, perhaps deceptively so, but in the hands of these Scottish authors interiority became a crucial development in the genre. The narrators I survey in the scope of

¹⁹ This can also be seen in the continued development and appreciation of museums, for instance.

this project use the pursuit of knowledge as a new way to experience the exciting bursts of heightened sensation previously only seen in moments of extreme physicality within the genre²⁰.

Through their interactive engagements with objects, each of these narrators finds a way to embrace the ideal of interiority, acquiring knowledge of the self in their efforts to become more whole, healthy individuals. Even if their efforts do sometimes backfire, what these narrators learn about themselves and about the world around them, all while considering the object and what it might signify, invites the reader to likewise pursue this journey, to risk asking questions about the world around us. Picking up or otherwise handling objects or even just gazing at them can promote curiosity and speculation about the blend that occurs between “the natural from the artificial” and the “material from the immaterial” (Candlin and Guins 2), crucial work for the interior adventure of fashioning the self.

²⁰ I would suggest that this feeling of heightened sensation is closely akin to Virginia Woolf’s “moments of being” or what Paul Zweig has termed in *The Adventurer* as “parentheses of unreal intensity, which descend upon us, transposing us into their wholeness and vanishing” (224). Although the heroic narrators of adventures do sometimes have these “parentheses of unreal intensity” during moments of extreme physical exertion (i.e. R.M. Ballantyne’s Ralph Rider, H. Rider Haggard’s Allan Quatermain, Rudyard Kipling’s Daniel Dravot and Peachey Carnahan, Anthony Hope’s Rudolf Rasendyll, or even Conan Doyle’s Lord John Roxton) these moments are so fleeting that they can be very readily overlooked. (Adventures by female authors such as L.T. Meade, Augusta Marryat and her sister Emily, and Bessie Marchant also tend to prize this moment when it occurs during extreme physical exertion over that which occurs during a deeper, more introspective process.) Interiority as provoked and stimulated by the object and a response to it provides a much stronger, more developed, and ultimately more sustained sense of the moment of being. It is this particular crux that I am interested in.

Interiority can emerge and is temporarily emphasized when working with or encountering the object.

Objects are at their most important for these three authors when they allow for a consideration of different types of anxiety. Objects signify not only an anxiety about a place in a rapidly changing world; they also reflect our anxieties about others and ourselves back at us. For Stevenson, simple everyday objects that might otherwise be ignored such as crutches and silver buttons become important repositories of tensions regarding the disabled Other or a gradual loss of understanding of a nation's history, for example. Elsewhere, Conan Doyle's narrators tackle objects that illuminate concerns regarding rampant immigration and political upheaval as well as threats to domestic harmony within the household. Finally, Buchan's heroic Richard Hannay tries to read objects for what they can reveal to him about their owners, but instead ends up (temporarily) foiled in his readings by his own racism, homophobia, and classism. The most significant anxiety that these texts share is the possible disconnect between the individual and the community. Each narrator ends up, to some extent, overcome by their own overanxious and overstimulated imaginations. In considering the object, the narrators created by these three authors showcase the problem of how looking at objects as clues about others and about ourselves can overstimulate the imagination with anxieties that can cripple action. Only through the process of regarding the object through an orderly, well-regulated interiority can these anxieties be defeated. In considering the object and what it reflects about our own takes on ourselves and the others around us, we can learn to appreciate individuality while also learning how to become better community members and

stewards of the resources that we have been entrusted with. In sum, I link these three authors as being interested in 1) the further development of partnership between individual and community; 2) thinking about how reading the object can help to teach us more about our fellow humans and ourselves; and 3) recognizing how we must be carefully trained to think about and read the object.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

In my first chapter, “A Romance of All Things”: Surveying Objects in Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, I read Stevenson as transfixed by questions about common everyday objects and what they signify. This chapter offers an overview of Stevenson’s attitudes regarding material culture, attitudes that found expression in both his personal correspondence and his literary criticism, as well as a close reading of the representation of objects in his two seminal adventure novels, *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. I argue that the representations of objects in these novels exposes an array of anxieties about what objects are and what they can tell us about the people who use them. Stevenson’s work in the adventure subgenre marks an interesting shift inwards that signals the process of adventure is not necessary solely reliant upon physicality. Instead, an adventurous encounter with objects can lead toward the development of interiority utilizing the creative imagination. This newly configured version of the creative imagination becomes, in turn, both a stressor and a useful tool in combating anxiety. Stevenson’s early adventure novels emerge as much more complex when considering the issue of objects and what they highlight about anxieties such as financial, cultural, and familial loss. The descriptive object becomes a tool that allows for a reflective critique about both the self and others.

In the second chapter, “ “The object justified it. The object justified everything”: Adventuring Through the Short Stories of Arthur Conan Doyle,” I argue that the objects in Conan Doyle’s short stories allow for a safe testing of intellectual acumen that sometimes goes awry. In the short stories of Conan Doyle, the object’s importance rests in the fact that it can tell us more about what our brains already know and what still remains *to* be known. In this chapter, I offer a close examination of the Sherlock Holmes story “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” that shows the titular objects as signifiers reflecting the racial and cultural values of their beholders, rather than as mere *objet d’art*. I also survey the lesser known “The Jew’s Breastplate,” which illustrates the complicated relationship between the collected object and the collector, one that results in significant damage to both. Finally, I turn to yet another understudied story, “That Little Square Box,” teasing out the very real dangers of misreading objects and the people associated with them. Put together, these stories further complicate the already murky relationship that exists between people and their objects.

In my third chapter, “Uneasy Among “A Wonderful Treasury of Beautiful Things”: John Buchan’s Richard Hannay Novels,” I look at how Buchan’s popular spy novels continue the tradition of raising and addressing concerns about the social, political, and historical ramifications of an ethical engagement with material culture. In the novels centered around the heroic figure Richard Hannay, objects prompt a thorough consideration of what they signify for the people who use, admire, talk about, or ignore them. Buchan’s work, like that of Stevenson and Conan Doyle before him, navigates a civilization where sometimes objects are the only clues available to interpret just how to fit in to a greater community.

Hannay's transformation from recently arrived wealthy colonial to celebrated British war hero and country home owner allows him a chance to draw upon his own rich interiority and anxieties. Throughout, Hannay's resources and skills help him to interpret and appreciate what he most values about his own comforts.

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CHAPTER ONE

“A ROMANCE OF ALL THINGS”:

SURVEYING OBJECTS IN ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON’S

TREASURE ISLAND AND KIDNAPPED

What exactly is it that we value about common everyday objects? Why are they so important to our everyday lives? The Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson, who lived from 1850 until 1894, was transfixed by these questions throughout much of his career²¹. Serious personal concerns about money, inheritance, and the comforts of home occupied much of Stevenson’s recorded thought during the 1880s as he considered emigration²². These thoughts eventually found artistic expression in the works that he is today best known for: *Treasure Island* (1883), *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (1885), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), and *Kidnapped* (first serialized in 1886). Stevenson’s personal correspondence during this time is rooted in anxiety as he and his family tried to decide what should be packed and what should be left behind when he finally decided to emigrate. According to his letters to friends and business associates material goods such as books, statues, paintings, woodblocks, candlesticks, and musical instruments were tangible reminders of the past that were of use, even in a new venue. They could be used for practical purposes (decoration of his new homes in Saranac Lake or in Samoa, for instance), as items worthy of introspection and critical inquiry, or as powerful reminders of the friends and family left back home.

²¹ Stevenson continued to survey objects and human response to them in works throughout his career such as *The Master of Ballantrae*, *Olalla*, *The Beach of Falesá*, *The Ebb-Tide*, *The Dynamiters*, and *The Wrong Box*.

²² Faced with ill health, Stevenson finally made the decision to emigrate in 1887.

These objects offered solid connections tracing back to a permanent homeland, a place otherwise lost, for both Stevenson and his closest family members.

(Osborne). Writing in *Portable Property*, John Plotz has observed that it was sometimes difficult for the Victorians, in thinking about the many objects that surrounded them, to determine “which sort of portability matter[ed] most: the physical [. . .] or [. . .] metaphorical” (3). Like so many of his contemporaries, Stevenson struggled both in his life and in his literary work as he figured out “which sort of portability matter[ed] most.” With this background in mind, this chapter offers 1) a reading of Stevenson’s general outlook toward material culture and 2) a close reading of the representation of objects in Stevenson’s two seminal adventure novels, *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. I suggest that the representations of objects in these novels exposes an array of anxieties about what objects are and what they can tell us about the people who use them. In offering this analysis, I propose that Stevenson’s work in the adventure subgenre marks an interesting new turn inwards, implying that the process of adventure is not necessary solely reliant upon physicality²³. Instead, an adventurous encounter with objects can lead toward the development of interiority, or more specifically, the creative imagination. This newly configured version of the creative imagination

²³ Stevenson’s novels did much to reinvigorate the field of adventure “romance” (as Stevenson, Kipling, Haggard, and Lang were fond of referring to this particular subgenre). With the creation of *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* Stevenson significantly broke with the traditions established by earlier authors such as Ballantyne. Ballantyne’s work (especially in novels such as his most enduring, *The Coral Island*, emphasized moral improvement and the fostering of a British identity. Stevenson’s work troubles what dangers lurk when we become too complacently accepting of the moral and cultural codes that surround us. In other words, Ballantyne’s heroes accept but Stevenson’s heroes question these codes.

significantly becomes, in turn, a useful tool in combating anxiety. Read in this light, Stevenson's works attempt to negotiate the manifold ways that objects can highlight pre-existing anxieties about financial, cultural, and familial loss.

DEVELOPING A SYSTEM: STEVENSON AS CRITIC

Stevenson's surviving notebooks show that his extensive interest in both people and objects was starting to develop even before he took a class in 1872-3 on political economy and mercantile law at the University of Edinburgh taught by William Ballantyne Hodgson, the first chair of political economy. In this class, Stevenson was exposed to the works of thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, and David Ricardo. Thinking about how value is determined and assigned, as well as the potential legal ramifications of these decisions seems to have more thoroughly engaged the young Stevenson than his coursework in other subjects²⁴. Encouraged by Professor Hodgson, Stevenson's interest in socioeconomics—a frequent topic in his poems, letters, essays, and his later novels—dates from this period. In his notebooks from this class, the young Stevenson put his newly acquired knowledge to work. Thinking more deeply about both his own creature comforts and recent cultural debates about property, ownership, and charity in his notebooks, Stevenson began to consciously consider the many comforts associated with objects ("Notebook 1").

²⁴ Within the notebooks that are part of the Beinecke Library's holdings for this time period, there are far fewer sketches of highwaymen and pirates, poetic attempts, and tangential references to either skipping class altogether or wishing for class to be over in order to "drink and philosophize" with friends at meetings of the Edinburgh Speculative Society.

For Stevenson, a materialist or someone who “favour[ed] material possessions and physical comfort over spiritual objects; a person who adopts a materialistic way of life” (OED) was instead a “Unity-arian.” In redefining terms and rejecting any potential negativity about the term “materialist,” Stevenson chooses comfort, defining the “Unity-arian”²⁵ as a person who simply appreciates common sense, pleasure, value, and taste; in short, someone who can and does allow their thinking to expand upon coming into contact with the object. In trying to work out his definition of “Unity-arian” in his notebooks, Stevenson recognized that “our powers of exchanging thought are entirely and absolutely bounded by the number and definiteness of our words” recognizing the numerous problems encountered when trying to observe and discuss objects (“Notebook 1” 22). Stevenson’s idea of the “Unity-arian” here, although never fully developed, is essentially a rehearsing of the more pleasant aspects of Calvinistic materialism. Unlike some of his contemporaries who believed that having too many possessions was problematic, Stevenson recognized that objects, and the ownership thereof, signaled status as a worthy and capable steward. There is nothing wrong with embracing material culture in this system, as long as one knows their own tastes and values.

This initial idea seems simple but an encounter with objects is much more fractious. Too many objects can result in too much comfort, in a slowing down or a

²⁵ Stevenson’s extracurricular reading during this period included many American transcendentalist writers, especially Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). Given Stevenson’s thorough immersion in Emerson’s writings and his own religious struggles which began at this point in his career and continued throughout his life, it is very likely that he is making a pun regarding the Unitarian religion with his coining of the term “Unity-arian”.

shutting down of the processes of mental inquiry brought about by thinking about both objects and people. The slow shutdown becomes what is negative, what needs to be rejected with Stevenson's refreshing idea of Unity-arianism. There is no harm in objects, as long as we can recognize what they signify and that our abilities for absorbing and transmitting that knowledge are restricted by language. Put simply, objects can still be savored as tokens of comfort and taste, as long as we can think about them and have the ability to share those thoughts.

As a novelist, Stevenson frequently returns to the idea of the materialist/Unity-arian when he emphasizes a human interaction with objects, especially in his adventure novels. What makes objects interesting in *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* is that they are exchanged but constantly subjected to shifting modes of value. The familiar object is one that seems strange, filled with significance that we cannot quite identify, a significance that seems tangible but never quite is. The object seems clear, like something we can understand and grasp but ultimately it remains elusive. Stevenson's novels mark an important moment in the adventure subgenre because they feature characters experiencing 1) "episodes of flamboyant risk" (Zweig 4) in exotic locales and 2) intense inward adventure as they consider the many intriguing facets of the object. Stevenson's novels explore how the heroes of adventure use objects to develop the "powers of exchanging thought" ("Notebook 1" 22) so crucial for survival. Stevenson's early adventure novels anticipate critical theories regarding objects and things. He embraces simple items such as crutches, buttons, and coats as avenues for discussion about "what's absent," what has been "cut off," what "particular functions" are, and what can only be "inferred through experience," all ideas that Ian Bogost has traced as

crucial to the development of object studies (Bogost 23-24). Ultimately, in Stevenson's work, the object matters because it compels narrator and reader alike to evaluate the past, to think about their hopes for the future, and to question their present state of being.

THE OBJECT AND THE ADVENTURE

For Stevenson, a well described object in an adventure is important because of the way it increases mental stimulation on the part of both the reader and the hero, all while provoking an investigation of "character, thought, or emotion." Within his 1882 essay "A Gossip on Romance" Stevenson continues his probing study of both objects and adventure literature such as *Robinson Crusoe*. Within this essay Stevenson examines the relationship between people and objects occurring in these works, realizing that for writer, narrator, and reader alike "every thing is important," "a joy for ever" because of the way that the object increases mental stimulation. Objects, Stevenson argues, succeed in "fill[ing]" "our mind[s]" "with the busiest kaleidoscopic dance of images" (247). The object provokes questions about what possession means, where objects come from, how they were created or used, and how they can be used in new settings. Within this essay, Stevenson proclaims the adventure novel as really "a romance of all things" that are simultaneously "abstract," "realistic," and "ideal." Thinking more deeply about his own readings of *Robinson Crusoe*, Stevenson argues that the description of the object cannot be too overwhelming because even "treasure trove can be made dull." The imagination of both the narrator and the reader needs room to roam, to play, and to think in order to experience "joy." If there are too many objects, there is "no gusto and no glamour," only boredom. The specificity of objects needs to

stimulate the reader's thoughts. Stevenson's theory can be read as an examination of the correlation between the object, specificity, the imagination, wonder, and joy. Put into practice, the representation of the object in adventure novels such as *Kidnapped* allows readers to develop an imaginative scope that can lead to "whole vistas of secondary stories." Stimulated by reading an adventure that highlights objects, the reader can begin to safely navigate concerns about political, social, or cultural anxieties. For Stevenson, the well-crafted adventure allows for an imagination that can freely roam, operating in excitingly productive ways.

The object in the adventure offers a safe space to begin developing the skills of interiority needed for navigating real life. Emphasizing the political tensions of the eighteenth century allows Stevenson to subtly challenge the long-accepted ideals of heroically virtuous (and English) adventure heroes. The flawed heroes of *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, unaware of what objects signify and who must be carefully trained, stand out as a significant contrast to Jack of *The Coral Island* or even Robinson Crusoe himself, who (generally) knows where all of the objects on his island came from, what they signify, and how they can be used. The heroes of Stevenson's work see objects but at the beginning of their tales are not yet fully engaged in the work of observing. They have the rudimentary skills required for interiority but have to learn how to engage and use these skills.

Throughout his oeuvre, Stevenson's writings, particularly his novels, highlight a variety of typical late Victorian anxieties. For the Victorians some of these concerns included issues relating to immigration, a large and surging population of women and orphans, education, the treatment of the poor and the disabled. These topics, among many others, were continually under discussion in

the home, the workplace, the place of worship, and in the periodical press. The narrators in the novels that I read in this chapter—*Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*—all struggle through concerns about patriarchy, the role of women and children within the home or on the road, education and the pursuit of a career, safety and travel, political choices, and most importantly, how to build an individual character that will be respected by a broader society. Both primary narrators, Jim Hawkins and David Balfour, also attempt to deal with an additional Victorian anxiety that Stephen Arata has suggested that Stevenson himself suffered from, namely that “to be professional was to be bourgeois” (44). The youthful David and Jim use their adventurous encounters with objects to struggle against “blindnesses, evasions, and immoralities” (Arata 44) before returning to the respectable bourgeois community. Significantly, both *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* end before either narrator can fully embark on a career. In a sense, Jim and David are caught, mid-struggle, still honing their innate characters. Both narrators keenly desire clarity, structure, and order, something that the process of adventure denies. For each of these narrators, an encounter with objects collected by others results in an inward journey, learning more about anxieties and ways to overcome them, primarily through the processes of introspection and a developing reliance upon the powers of the imagination.

Like the heroes of Stevenson’s novels, however, we are sometimes not yet ready for this work. We must be brought to a “condition for thought” first. In the poem “Happy Thought” (1885) from *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, Stevenson’s first-person narrator cheerily and cheekily proclaims in this singular couplet that “[t]he world is so full of a number of things, / I’m sure we should all be as happy as

kings.” Unable to engage in the type of internal scrutiny that the subject-object relationship typically brings about. In the two lines that comprise this poem, the childish narrator, like so many adults, does not and cannot take into account the many ramifications of the multi-faceted object and simply readily accepts them, without any form of introspective thought whatsoever. By way of contrast, the narrators of *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* are typically possessed of a more abstract meditative mental state, one where they are ready to engage the object and to think about what it signifies. They may, as yet, lack the skills to do so effectively.

In her essay entitled “Childhood and Psychology,” Julia Reid has indicated that Stevenson’s interest in imagination and play allowed him to deal “in a sophisticated manner with evolutionist understandings of childhood, the imagination, and the unconscious” (41). Specifically, Reid notes that Stevenson’s depiction of “the childhood imagination” was “either invigoratingly primitive or dangerously morbid” (43). Thinking more about the relationship of these narrators with objects reveals Stevenson dabbling with the notion that imagination should be encouraged and that in children, it is “a primitive archetype of adult creativity” that should be nurtured (Reid 44). What makes reading novels like *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* rewarding is that the narrator’s attempts to deal with “a number of objects” prompts a careful consideration of cultural loss, shared history, and class issues. None of the characters that occupy the world of these novels, filled as they are with “a number of objects” ever feel as “happy as kings.” The complex political situation of the eighteenth century, when both novels are set, is such that even the rightful claimants to thrones – those who should indeed feel as happy as

kings -- are consistently unhappy. In this world populated by pirates, scavengers, highwaymen and other unsavory sorts, the good hardworking people of Scotland and coastal England desperately cling to those small objects that are reminders of better times. Investigating what objects signify and why they matter so much allows the narrators of these novels the mental space required to consider the contentious history that has helped to form their own opinions of the world. Additionally, the dynamic between the person and the object also allows these narrators to consider their own place within complicated family structures. In this topsy-turvy world objects allow the narrator—and by extension, the reader—a path to internal contemplation. In the midst of adventure, the unexpected encounter with the object offers new ways of seeing and reading the history of one's family and one's nation while also allowing a chance to turn inward, to examine a personal place within both of these histories and what such a personal place might mean.

Stevenson's 1878 essay "Child's Play" suggests that he was very much aware of contemporary Victorian discussions "about the power of imagination in the young" (76) Thinking about *Robinson Crusoe*, a recurring exemplar of his own favored childhood reading practices, Stevenson argues that one of the reasons why adventure novels were popular with young readers is the fact that they allow room for the free play of the imagination. For instance, Stevenson observes that *Robinson Crusoe* is a "book [. . .] all about tools, and there is nothing that delights a child so much. Hammers and saws belong to a province of life that positively calls for imitation" (77). Stevenson was interested in the fact that play developed the child's ability to turn into a productive member of society capable of work. Previous Victorian thinkers such as Thomas Carlyle believed that work (and the

ability to work) was the all-important marker of masculinity and that introspection was a sign of corruption and idleness (Danahay 25-27). In *Treasure Island*, Jim Hawkins is able to go about the hard play/work of cabin boy/adventurer that marks him as a capable man in a Carlylean sense. On the other hand, he can use his imaginative prowess in a way that does not diminish his (potential) masculinity. In other words, he can introspectively experiment, as long as he returns to the safe and masculine world of adventure-work. If introspection and imagination are the terrain of the mind, work, in at least a physical sense, is best associated with the body. Exposure to the object ideally results in increased stimulation of both body and mind. This idea of “imitation” and exploration which Stevenson states is crucial for learning a profession is the same impetus that propels Jim forward throughout his many adventures in *Treasure Island*. I contend that the chance to play with objects or “tools” gives Jim the space for introspection that he needs in order to mature during his adventures,

LEARNING TO VALUE ANXIETIES: *TREASURE ISLAND*

Treasure Island exposes deep anxieties about how the objects that we may carry in a rapidly changing world can be used or abused, particularly when their user is in a state of emotional crisis, a state that can only be solved through reflective introspection coupled with and unleashing of the imagination. Throughout *Treasure Island* the boyish narrator, Jim Hawkins, continually theorizes about the ways that objects work and where they come from. Jim’s imagination is particularly keen when he scrutinizes ordinary items such as sea-chests, barrels, clothes, and crutches. Looking at the changing relationship between people and objects highlights the connections between misadventure, surprise,

curiosity, education, and the imagination, all crucial themes within *Treasure Island*.

Set in the middle of the eighteenth century, *Treasure Island* revolves around Jim Hawkins, a young man who works at his family inn but eventually becomes a cabin boy aboard *Hispaniola*. The *Hispaniola* journeys to find the long-lost treasure of the notorious pirate Captain Flint. Unbeknownst to Jim and his associates Captain Smollett, Doctor Livesey, and Squire Trelawney, the dynamic ship's cook, Long John Silver, has reunited the remnants of Flint's old crew to pursue the treasure for himself. After many perilous adventures involving great physical risk, Jim and his allies triumph over the pirates and find the treasure. But *Treasure Island* is also a novel about loss, anxiety, and learning how to deal with both.

Sensitive, thoughtful, and continually meditative, Jim initially finds his attention captured by the arresting figure of an old sea captain. The son of a public house owner, Jim reads people in a mercantile fashion, viewing them through the objects that they carry, wear, buy, and eat. Fascinated by the captain's mysterious "sea-chest following behind him in a hand-barrow" (1), Jim also pays close attention to the captain's clothes, objects that physically manifest the captain's self-proclaimed identity. While Billy, the captain, claims that he has money, can pay for room and board at the inn, and can even pay for Jim to keep a lookout for strangers, Billy's clothes do not support these claims: "[o]ne of the cocks of his hat having fallen down, he let it hang from that day forth, though it was a great annoyance when it blew. I remember the appearance of his coat, which he patched himself upstairs in his room, and which, before the end, was nothing but patches."

(4). In this moment, Jim is struck by the fact that the captain is a man of habits but is also one who does not mind the great annoyance caused by his clothes falling apart. Marked by the appearance of his coat, the captain, “nothing but patches,” proves to be an unpleasant guest at the Admiral Benbow Inn²⁶, causing many anxieties within the Hawkins family. While his clothes initially served as a marker of his former professional status, they now mark him as broken²⁷.

READING THE SECRETS OF SEA-CHESTS

Jim also notices that the captain has a “great sea-chest [that] none of us had ever seen open” (5). The sea-chest suggests that the captain has had a mysterious past and becomes an object of contention when the captain suddenly dies. Jim’s imaginative interactions with objects, particularly when he unpacks this chest, allows for him to begin recovering from the recent trauma of both his father’s death and that of the captain. Unpacking the chest and discovering the objects inside serves as a powerful metaphor for Jim’s gradual unpacking of himself as he tells the narrative of his earliest adventure. Jim and his mother decide to investigate the contents of the sea-chest, but before they can do so, Jim must find a key. In hunting for the key, he must search through the pockets of the now-dead Captain Billy, where he finds: “[a] few small coins, a thimble, and some thread and big needles, a piece of pigtail tobacco bitten away at the end, his gully with the crooked handle, a pocket compass, and a tinder box” (21). The collection of objects as interpreted by Jim is incomplete due to the absence of the key and the

²⁶ Admiral John Benbow (1653-1702), British seaman best known for his exploits against pirates in the West Indies (Hattendorf).

²⁷ The Captain contrasts the “neat, bright” and orderly Doctor Livesey (5).

absence of the person who initially collected this hodge-podge: the captain. The “piece of pigtail tobacco bitten away at the end” and “his gully²⁸ with the crooked handle” are the objects in this collection that stand out due to their irregularities or imperfections. Yet the knife and the tobacco are not what Jim is looking for, and thus, they completely fail to capture his attention. Jim’s fixation on the discovery of the key so that he can explore the contents of the sea-chest obscures his ability to thoughtfully observe the rest of the collection found in the captain’s pockets. Pressed for time, he cannot stop to consider the imperfections of the gully or where the tobacco came from. Instead, he must concentrate specifically on what he most desires. Without the curation, however, of the original collector, or the participation of the object’s creator, the collection itself can never tell a complete story. Here, the multitude of objects must wait for the imagination of the beholder in order to be even partially interpreted. For most of these objects that moment never comes.

Eventually, Jim discovers the key in one of the captain’s pockets and proceeds, with his mother, to the man’s former room, where they proceed to examine the chest up close. Jim observes that closed, the chest is “like any other seaman’s chest on the outside, the initial “B” burned on the top of it with a hot iron, and the corners somewhat smashed and broken as by long, rough usage” (21-22). The initial “B” burned on the top and the smashed and broken corners allow this particular seaman’s chest to suddenly stand out against the background of the

²⁸ A Scottish word for a large knife (Scottish Language Dictionaries).

room, and by extension, all other chests. Jim's mother opens the chest and the two begin to notice the contents:

A strong smell of tobacco²⁹ and tar rose from the interior, but nothing was to be seen on the top except a suit of very good clothes, carefully brushed and folded. They had never been worn, my mother said. Under that, the miscellany began—a quadrant, a tin canikin, several sticks of tobacco, two brace of very handsome pistols, a piece of bar silver, an old Spanish watch and some other trinkets of little value and mostly of foreign make, a pair of compasses mounted with brass, and five or six curious West Indian shells. I have often wondered since why he should have carried about these shells with him in his wandering, guilty, and hunted life³⁰. (22)

The sea chest here functions as a space for collection. Jean Baudrillard, in his discussion of “the mythology of the antique object” in *The System of Objects*, notes that “there are two distinctive features [. . .] that need to be pointed out: the nostalgia for origins and the obsession with authenticity” (42). The contents of the sea chest operate here at both levels: the captain has collected based upon a desire to fulfill a personal nostalgia for origins while Jim is interested in opening the chest because of “an obsession with authenticity.” The captain's suit of very good clothes, his brace of very handsome pistols, the piece of bar silver, old Spanish watch, the compasses and the quadrant are only items in a miscellany when initially viewed through Jim's eyes. Jim is interested in the captain's origins but

²⁹ While Stevenson suffered from lung disease throughout his lifetime, this did not stop him from a love of tobacco. His notebooks, manuscripts, and published pieces are frequently filled with references to smoking habits. The collection of Stevenson materials held by the Beinecke Library holds a pipe and matchbook found on his desk after his death, lasting mementoes of this habit. The Stevenson museum at Saranac Lake also hold smoking paraphernalia and features a mantelpiece scarred with cigarette burns.

³⁰ Stevenson loves assemblages of objects within objects. Other examples can be found in works including *The Master of Ballantrae* and *The Beach of Falésa*.

the objects, separated as they are from the captain himself, merely slow Jim down, distracting him from other more important tasks.

Yet these distractions are valid, given that they provide respite. Considering the contents of the captain's chest and the objects within it, for Jim, temporarily removes him from the scene of his anxieties regarding payment, the arrival of the members of the captain's former crew, and his own anxieties regarding what he and his mother will do now that his father has passed away. Looking back in time, recording his adventures as per the request of Squire Trewlaney and Doctor Livesey, Jim Hawkins, in Baudrillard's terms, becomes, in this moment of gazing at the objects that another has collected, "not the one who *is*, in the present, full of *angst* – rather, I am the one who *has been*, as indicated by the course of the reverse birth of which the antique object is the sign, a course which leads from the present far back into time: a regression, therefore. The antique object thus presents itself as a myth of origins." (42, emphasis Baudrillard's) In recounting how he has frequently thought about the sea shells and how Billy has acquired them, Jim becomes aligned with "the one who *has been*," regressing as he considers and reevaluates the possibilities of a "myth of origins" for both himself and for the captain. All of the items present in the chest suggest a typical seaman's possessions—tobacco, firearms, the quadrant—yet the West Indian shells prove to be the most exotic, unusual, present objects that must be contemplated. They alone stand out, marking the collection as special and unique. More questions emerge than can be answered about these shells. What type are they? What do they look like? How long ago were they collected and where? The most important question, which also cannot be answered, is raised by Jim himself in his query about why the

captain collected these shells and then transported them throughout his “wandering, guilty, and hunted life”? In the wake of the captain’s passing, the relative importance of the shells shifts. They no longer operate as mementoes, portable memories of a time past that we can hold in the palm of a hand. Instead, as the shells are observed by Jim, they stand out against the background of the sea-chest and its contents, becoming object-tools or aids to the imagination. With the death of the captain, and no written record of where he picked up the shells or what they signified to him, it is left to Jim to commit thought experiments and to dabble with imaginatively considering the past. In other words, the shells lead Jim to consider, again and again, the relationship between subject and object or the curious relationship that exists between the collected item and the collector.

What makes this particular process difficult, however, is that Jim and his mother, the one surviving adult in his life (so far) who could offer him advice on how to evaluate objects for value, do not initially recognize any other “value” (22) than the economic value associated with cold hard cash³¹. As the two continue to unpack the chest together, Jim observes that “we had found nothing of any value but the silver and the trinkets.” As they continue to unpack the chest, they find “the last objects in the chest, a bundle tied up in oilcloth, and looking like papers, and a canvas bag that gave forth, at a touch, the jingle of gold” (22). Jim’s mother, interested in being compensated for the expenses that the captain has run up during his long stay at the Admiral Benbow, tries to sort out the various coinage—“doubloons, and louis d’ors, and guineas, and pieces of eight”, among others—

³¹ It is interesting to observe that Jim seems to abhor this quality in his mother.

willing to take no more than her exact due (22). But she finds it difficult to figure out rates of exchange, the pirates show up to ransack the inn, and she and Jim must flee for their lives. Jim grabs the “bundle tied up in oilcloth, and looking like papers” in the hope that there will be something that he can control and manage that is of value. This bundle, alongside the coinage that Mrs. Hawkins has sorted, shows the problems of objects—they are hard to see and harder still to assign value to.

The problem of value in this particular episode is important in understanding Jim and his motivation. In their introduction to their collection *The Object Reader*, cultural studies critics Fiona Candlin and Raiford Guins remind us that objects are “used to circulate value, demarcate our habitats and habits, and enforce the law, as well as to connect us to and disconnect us from friends, colleagues or strangers. These objects can make us rich or ruin us; they can contribute to and utterly impoverish our environment” (2). Ultimately, the possessions of the captain confirm a confusing circulation of value, one that Jim is not yet capable of fully understanding. In scrutinizing the sea-chest and its contents, trying to figure out which objects are of value and which are not, Jim becomes more aware of many of his own deep-seated anxieties. His father has recently died (promoting him to man of the house), the family business has not been prospering, and his mother (a generally practical woman) has been showing signs of hysteria and a coming emotional collapse. His family and personal life are in complete upheaval before this episode, yet he only comes to grips with this reality when examining the objects hidden inside the sea-chest. Other, more immediate anxieties include the money, the “bundle tied up in oilcloth,” and even

the sea shells that initially contributed to the environment of the Admiral Benbow but instead end up utterly impoverishing the Hawkins when they must flee from their home³². The looming physical threat of Billy's former companions and their quest for the chest, as well as Jim's survey of the objects in the chest, gives him a chance to free himself from the constraints of a staid bourgeois life as the owner-manager of a failing public house. The mysteries of the sea-chest prove to be costly ones for Jim as the quest for them on the part of the captain's former associates ends up depriving Jim and his mother of their own physical property. Jim finds himself, after this early encounter with objects, pushed even further away from a stage of youthful innocence.

While this initial encounter with objects is problematic for the family, it still creates as a space for Jim to use his imagination which is stimulated when and while he interacts with the objects of the dead. In his speculative imaginative conjurings, Jim considers the perils of a life at sea, contrasting it with his own staid and placid existence on shore. Indeed, he takes pleasure in his safe explorations of the idea of a life significantly different from his own. Yet the sea-chest still proves to be the source of many anxieties for the youthful Jim. He is, of course, curious about the contents of the chest, but in order to even open it, he must overcome a variety of different personal anxieties: the awareness of the time of the planned return of the pirates, having to go through the dead man's pockets in order to find a

³² The inn is later repaired by Jim's patron Squire Trelawney. Jim notes that the inn, now filled with new objects, is not the same as the place that he grew up. As a result, he feels alienated and alone, in spite of his mother's presence in the place (39-40).

key, and the anxiety of sorting through a virtual stranger's possessions. Jim's mother has her own set of anxieties involving proper recompense for the room and board provided to the captain³³. The heightened sense of tension as Jim searches the dead man's chest partly stems from the fact that he is very aware of the fact that he is working against time. Jim's anxiety here, heightened as it is by his continual listening for the return of the pirates, is coupled with his surprise at finding the unexpected West Indian shells. He has fully embraced the idea of the captain as the epitome of a bad man, yet the notion that such a man could collect trinkets like these and then treasure them for a number of years calls this idea into question. The objects in the chest trigger anxieties because they both force Jim to think more about others and to question his evolving role in the world. More importantly, the sea-chest's physical presence serves as a tangible reminder of the now-departed captain and his violent reputation. In trying to figure out how to assign value to objects, Jim begins to negotiate the problems of being thrust into adulthood and the family business, both roles that he has never been truly trained for. He cannot fully engage in the complexities of managing these concerns. The episode of the sea-chest provides an opportunity for Jim to experience a variety of strong emotional responses that, although they fill him with fear and terror, are still more pleasurable than the prospects of running a failing public house.

The act of unpacking a sea-chest allows Jim to figuratively unpack himself, to start maturing, to daydream about the possibilities of travel and a potential life

³³ Jim seems cognizant of the fact that his rifling through the pockets and then the sea-chest could potentially be misread as acts of theft. Jim and his mother are honest but there is no one who could testify as to the captain's habits of payment (20, 22, 24, 27-29).

beyond the confines of the sheltered cove that he has grown up in. Unpacking and examining the captain's possessions allows Jim a chance for meditation, to consider—albeit fleetingly—ideas related to sentiment (the captain's shells), and the cosmopolitan nature of the world, a thought that occurs as he watches his mother unpack and repack the captain's coinage (22-23). Jim's vision of the world expands through his contact with objects in this moment as he recognizes that the world of the captain was and is diverse, filled with exciting people, different languages, curious currencies. The moment when Jim, hearing the pirates arrive, tells his mother to "take the whole [referring to the money] and let's be going" is a crucial moment for in this scene, Jim is unveiled as a fast thinker, one capable of making a decision and giving orders to adults³⁴ (23). While this idea of fast thinking is a recurrent motif in the adventure novel, what makes Stevenson's characters so rich is their tendency to slow down, to more thoroughly meditate upon the multi-faceted and complicated relationship between subject and object or, put another way, people and what they see, desire, use. Jim's imagination, stimulated as it is by contact with the object, allows for him to more quickly evaluate situations of danger. Jim's imagination must run rampant in order for him to fully appreciate the people that he comes into contact with and the objects that they carry. Unpacking the chest and then the bundles left behind by the captain allows Jim the intellectual freedom necessary to speculate on the captain's past, to dream about the pirate treasure, and to start constructing plans for his life that have

³⁴ This is something he has not done before this moment. It is a skill that will come in handy during his service aboard the *Hispaniola*.

nothing to do with the family business, something that he does not seem to have much desire to continue in anyway.

Jim and his mother, hearing the piratical companions of Billy Bones return, make their hasty exit from the inn. Their neighbors have previously refused to help. Jim, tense and angry, fumes at the fact that his mother cannot keep up during their flight. Overcome with physical and mental exhaustion, she faints. Jim chooses to remain at her side, but grumbles about both the failure of the neighbors to help and her insistence on staying until the last possible moment, in order to calculate and take only what was rightfully hers (22). In the moonlight, in full view, Jim ends up coming face to face with danger and anxiety alike. The objects he has taken from the dead man's chest become reflectors of his anxieties regarding the safety and status of his family. Just as Jim despairs the most, help arrives in the form of a party of horsemen led by the local revenue agent Mr. Dance³⁵. The intervention of Dance quickly disperses the pirates but also places Jim into contact with two other very powerful professional men: Squire Trelawney and Doctor Livesey.

At the end of this particular episode, the most important item inside the sea chest proves to be a "bundle tied up in oilcloth" that simultaneously ruins and enriches Jim (23). Inside the bundle, a treasure map awaits. The map both leads Jim towards the adventure of his life aboard the *Hispaniola* but also leads to the destruction of the family business and the dissolving of his remaining ties to family life. Although Jim's powerful new ally, Squire Trelawney, tries to undo the

³⁵ There are many sly reference to economics, banking, and taxation practices throughout *Treasure Island*.

physical damage of the pirates to the Admiral Benbow Inn, Jim learns, all too quickly, upon his return to the inn for a farewell visit with his mother that a great deal has already been lost. What he notices the most are two objects: “a beautiful armchair for mother in the bar” and “the dear old Admiral Benbow—since he was repainted, no longer quite so dear” (39-40). Both of these objects indicate a disruption in the order of objects that Jim has so long been accustomed to (36-39). In this passage, Jim’s anxieties at leaving home to take up a position as cabin boy fully emerge. He knows he will become a stranger onboard ship but here in his own home, he still expects a sense of security and order. Confronted as he is with the slow erasure of the past as demarcated in the repaired fixtures of the inn, the new beautiful armchair and the repainted inn sign, Jim is abruptly overwhelmed. Prior to this moment, Jim has not had a full opportunity for introspection, to dwell upon what his future holds. Here, his encounter with objects, objects that have been stripped of the mnemonic qualities that he has long associated them with, allows him to consider the ramifications of adventure. He is losing his home and his mother. Another boy is being trained in the family business. His choice to sail with Squire Trelawney in quest of pirate treasure has left him with a sense that, like the sign or armchair, he too can be readily replaced. This notion is too much to grapple with. Young as he is and following his impressions of correct male behavior, Jim falters but recovers, ignoring these object lessons and his anxieties, choosing instead to return to the “delightful dream” of treasure (40). The best way, in this particular moment, to conquer these social and familial anxieties seems to be to ignore them, but this decision has later consequences.

As Jim evaluates the map and ponders just what exactly it depicts, he also considers the people in his life, thinking more about who he can trust. Filled with an independent streak, Jim turns to the local professional men that he knows: Doctor Livesey (physician, magistrate, ex-soldier) and Squire Trelawney (landlord and former traveler). Not yet fully capable of making and executing his own decisions, Jim turns back to who he knows and what he knows, stepping back into a place of comfort, something that we instinctually do when we encounter new, exciting objects that we are unsure of how to interpret on our own. Thinking more about objects and watching how others interact with them allows Jim to develop a sort of intellectual and physical safety zone where he can rest and refashion his ideas about what objects might mean to him and how he operates (and wants to operate) with them in the future. Jim's relationship with objects and with people alike is dangerous at this stage for he is capable of misreading both. A combination of physical and mental resourcefulness (Irvine "Romance" 28) is needed to successfully overcome this continuous peril to the adventurer.

Interestingly, Jim is not the only character in *Treasure Island* struggling with observing the object. While Jim is temporarily away from the focus of action³⁶, the secondary narrator of *Treasure Island*, Doctor Livesey, records another chest full of objects. This chest only becomes visible once the good members of the crew of the ship *Hispaniola* make their way ashore to safety inside

³⁶ At this point in the novel, cabin boy Jim Hawkins has stowed away on a boat to see if he can get more information about the pirates and their plot. The faithful members of the crew, tasked with ensuring their own survival, suspect him of having betrayed their interests due to his friendship with the pirate chief Long John Silver.

of a log stockade on Skeleton Island. As the crew organizes their new quarters, the Doctor notices that Captain Smollett³⁷ is

wonderfully swollen about the chest and pockets, [with] [. . .] a great many various stores—the British colours, a Bible, a coil of stoutish rope, pen, ink, the log-book, and pounds of tobacco. He had found a longish fir-tree lying felled and trimmed in the enclosure [. . .] Then, climbing on the roof, he had with his own hand bent and run up the colours.

This seemed mightily to relieve him. He re-entered the log-house and set about counting up the stores as if nothing else existed. But he had an eye on Tom's passage for all that, and as soon as all was over, came forward with another flag and reverently spread it on the body. (94-95)
In this second crucial moment of unpacking, the Captain's body—his "chest"—

and his clothes, particularly his pockets, transform into a storehouse of objects. The various stores, items which would not have been much paid attention to aboard the *Hispaniola*, include the British colours, Bible, and the log-book.³⁸ These objects all aid the Captain in establishing order in his new setting while he engages in tasks such as counting up the stores, figuring out how he will defend both place and people against the impending attack of the pirates, and reverently covering the dead crewman Tom Redruth. In noting this moment, Doctor Livesey, professionally trained to observe order within the context of the human body, is drawn to this disruption to the order of the human body and watches, stunned, as the Captain's swollen chest unveils its hidden treasures. While the Doctor has previously expressed doubts about the Captain's ability and his habits in instilling shipboard order, here, he sees Captain Smollett as a fellow professional, a man

³⁷ In using this last name, Stevenson pays homage to Scottish author Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), noted for his picaresque novels.

³⁸ Of the many objects carried ashore by the Captain, what truly stands out here in the menacing landscape of Skeleton Island is the "British colours."

who commands not just people but objects as well, using both to establish order in a space long without it. He also suddenly sees Captain Smollett as a man who recognizes the powerful abilities of the object as signifier. For the doctor, the momentary combination of Captain-object is “wonderfully swollen” with possibilities. Captain Smollett’s efforts at establishing order cause Doctor Livesey to proclaim him “a better man than I am” (101). The objects selected by the Captain disrupt the senses of anarchy and confusion in the stockade, offering new hope because of the continuation of orderly shipboard practices.

Doctor Livesey stares, taking joy in watching the Captain unpack his chest, but eventually Captain Smollett’s “swollen” chest deflates. It is ultimately less satisfying than the physical sea-chest of Captain Billy Bones because the pirate’s objects more actively stimulate the imagination. Captain Smollett’s objects, in comparison, are too practical, selected for survival rather than to serve as personal mementoes and artifacts. Smollett’s “great many various stores” provide insight into what Captain Smollett values most—patriotism, order, continuity—but they do not provide a chance for the imagination to soar. Even the coil of stoutish rope and the pounds of tobacco prove to be practical in this crisis. When compared to the treasures of the sea-chest, especially the West Indian sea shells, Captain Smollett’s collection fails to express any type of individuality in either the original collector or the objects that he has assembled. The Captain, with his ability to restore order as evident in his collection of objects (the log book, the flags), reduces anxious tensions. In this particular context, the comfort of objects distracts from the very real physical threats that the men in the stockade face. The Doctor (a grown man) may be more excited about the orderly collection of objects that the

Captain brought ashore, but Jim (still a youth) is also capable of taking comfort in them when he returns to the safety of the stockade. After all, in this moment, there is something magnetic about seeing people capable of using objects, even if those objects are orderly ones. Here, seeing objects as signifiers of orderly staid comfort calms the overanxious, over-stimulated imagination. Jim begins his adventures desiring more exciting, dramatic objects rather than useful ones like those the Doctor and the Captain privilege. His perils eventually convince him to alter this view as he takes comfort in the small, practical objects saved by the Captain. This episode of the second sea-chest highlights the important role that objects have in developing order and speculation, both key requirements for physical and mental survival.

OBJECT LESSONS FROM OTHERS: LONG JOHN'S CRUTCH

Jim most enjoys seeing people use objects, especially those objects that can readily stimulate his imagination. Throughout the course of the novel, Jim is attracted to Long John Silver, the ship's cook, a man who knows about many objects. Silver³⁹ intrigues Jim due to his blustery, cheerful, earnest manner and the way that he manages to remain physically active even with a missing leg. Despite his disability, Silver, still faithfully executes all of the duties of a public house landlord when Jim first meets him on shore in Bristol. Jim rudely stares at Long

³⁹ While the name Silver can be read as an indicator of Long John's mercurial temperament, it can also be seen as a statement regarding his long history with money and investments. He previously served as Flint's quartermaster aboard the *Walrus*, is a successful businessman before he ships aboard *Hispaniola*, and other pirates and Squire Trelawney alike note that he has had good luck with banking (38).

John during their initial momentous encounter, noting that Silver's "left leg was cut off close by the hip, and under the left shoulder he carried a crutch, which he managed with wonderful dexterity, hopping about upon it like a bird" (42). In this moment, Silver is at his beguiling best, immediately capturing Jim's attention with his intelligence and good cheer. Here, the subject-object relationship between Silver and his crutch is such that Jim only sees a completely functioning whole individual. The object seems to be working in all of the ways that it should as a natural extension of Silver the man. Jim, however, grasps that something is not quite right with this very merry man and his own observations of him. Jim confides:

to tell you the truth, from the very first mention of Long John in Squire Trelawney's letter I had taken a fear in my mind that he might prove to be the very one-legged sailor whom I had watched for so long at the old Benbow. But one look at the man before me was enough. [. . .] I thought I knew what a buccaneer was like—a very different creature, according to me, from this clean and pleasant-tempered landlord. (42-43)

Initially warned by Captain Billy Bones, Jim has long since imagined encountering this very one-legged sailor, so much so, in fact, that he mentions the fear resultant from his long watch at the old Benbow. Bill Brown, writing in "Thing Theory," refers to "the thing baldly encountered" yet "not quite apprehended" (5) or that which "lies beyond the grid of intelligibility" (5). Here, Jim is cognizant of the fact that he should observe the crutch, that it serves as a sign of the danger that he has been told to expect, but perhaps because of the "bald[ness]" of the "encounter" he does not "quite apprehend" just what the crutch signifies. Is this failure because of the fact that the extremely dexterous Long John manages to make the crutch seem like an extension of himself? Or is it because Jim is not yet capable of accurately reading objects and people? Only in retrospect, as Jim recounts the adventure of

Treasure Island can he reconsider this initial encounter with the object as one warning him of danger. In telling the story of his past, he now sees that he was incapable of properly reading objects and the people that own them. Looking back, he now notices “the show of excitement” provided in the pub as one that calmed his fears, ending the thought-work that was begun by his initial observation of the crutch. In the moment of encounter with the crutch, Jim sees, but is not yet fully observant. For him, the crutch is just a crutch.

Writing in “A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality,” Vivian Sobchack has noted that regular users of prosthetic limbs typically do not think of their prosthetics as having a life apart from the user. Instead, they view the combination of organic and artificial, user and object, as part of a wholly concrete unit. Sobchack’s observation aids in the reading of Long John and his crutch. Although the reader, like Jim, may feel a curious sympathy for Long John’s infirmity and his difficult life aboard ship, Long John—and his crutch—instead should be read as a whole unit, more than capable of “stunning violence,” a perfect fusion of subject and object (76). Long John’s constant negotiations back and forth between the pirates and the faithful crew members of the *Hispaniola*, his usage of the crutch, and his keen desire for the long lost treasure all serve to reorient Jim. He is reminded that Long John is the most richly developed and whole character aboard *Hispaniola*, primarily because he is the crew member with the most complicated relationship with objects. In viewing Long John’s improvisations with his crutch, Jim learns to recognize that he regularly misreads Long John’s character. Long John’s frequent repurposing of his crutch, as read by Jim, hints at multiple social anxieties. These anxieties include concerns about disabled Others

and their roles in society; worries that no matter how hard we try, we can never completely relate to our fellow humans; fears that when our friends/colleagues/loved ones are threatened that we can do nothing to protect them; and finally, the very real notion that physical danger is always part of our surroundings.

Jim notices the crutch repurposed in two specific ways once the *Hispaniola* reaches Skeleton Island. Swept up with the spirit of adventure⁴⁰, Jim chooses to stow away on a small boat and joins the majority of the *Hispaniola*'s crew ashore. Slowly, Long John and his band of pirates begin liquidating any faithful members of the crew. As Jim hides, he suddenly hears Silver speaking with Tom⁴¹, one of the last remaining honest hands who declares that "If I die like a dog, I'll die in my dooty [sic]" (76). Tom walks away,

turn[ing] his back directly on the cook and [. . .] walking for the beach. But he was not destined to go far. With a cry John seized the branch of a tree, whipped the crutch out of his armpit, and sent that uncouth missile hurtling through the air. It struck poor Tom, point foremost, and with stunning violence, right between the shoulders in the middle of his back. His hands flew up, he gave a sort of gasp, and fell. (76)

Seeing the object used as something that it has not been designed for is shocking.

In this murderous moment, when the crutch becomes an "uncouth missile hurtling through the air," it is fully transformed into a murder weapon. As an object of "stunning violence" the crutch not only catches poor Tom unaware, it also manages to surprise Jim, who very nearly betrays himself. With Silver's cry, a

⁴⁰ This episode occurs shortly before the adventures of Captain Smollett in the stockade.

⁴¹ This is yet another sailor named Tom, and not the unfortunate Tom Redruth, who was covered by the flag in the stockade.

stunning staccato of furious action highlighting the crutch-as-object is introduced, revealing the crutch not as a helpful aid but instead as something dangerous to the members of a peaceful society. The perfect storm of anxiety that Jim is caught up in as he witnesses the repurposed object-crutch results in him becoming mentally overwhelmed. Overcome by the terror of witnessing Tom's murder by this highly unusual usage of the crutch, Jim falls into a swoon⁴². Jim's fainting hints at two additional social anxieties: the fear of a loss of masculinity and the fear of mental instability. In this particular episode the crutch-object causes Jim significant anxiety but it also leads to him having a brief respite from thought, one required for him to preserve his sanity amidst the dangerous hardships of adventure.

Jim sees Silver and the crutch in several more instances throughout the novel, but it is not until he is held as a hostage by the pirate crew that he observes the crutch again transformed, once again performing a new task beyond what it is expected to do. As Jim fears for his life and the pirates dig for treasure, Long John, foremost in the hunt, "dig[s] away with the foot of his crutch like one possessed" (180). Here, "the foot of his crutch" becomes a shovel, transforming the purpose of the crutch-as-object. Silver and the pirates loosely banded together under his command discover as a result of this digging, that there "was a great excavation, not very recent, for the sides had fallen in and grass had sprouted on the bottom" (180). Time has passed, remnants such as "the shafts of a pick" and broken boards remain, but the treasure is gone and has been for quite some time,

⁴² Jim conveniently faints or nearly faints at several moments throughout the novel when reason fails, most notably when he kills Israel Hands, the coxswain of the *Hispaniola* (76, 142-143).

based on the fact that “the sides had fallen in and grass had sprouted.” All that remains is a sense of temporary shock—and in Jim, terror—as the pirates all recognize the emptiness of the space due to the novel use of the crutch as a shovel.

Seeing Long John use the crutch as both a murder weapon and as a shovel shows Jim the Silver in a new way, one that emphasizes him as a dangerous but likable antagonist. Jim’s observations allow him to question the way that he has previously (mis)read both objects and other men. Throughout the journey of the *Hispaniola*, Jim gradually learns to become more discerning about other people, particularly the Squire (the ship’s owner) and Captain Smollett. The person that he learns the most about, however, is Silver. At his core, Jim likes Silver, who has generally treated him throughout with kindness and consideration. In viewing Long John’s improvisations with his crutch, Jim becomes aware that he has misread Long John’s character.

THE OBJECT AND THE IMAGINATION

What weaves all of these objects—the pirate’s sea-chest and the collection inside it, Captain Smollett’s figurative chest, and Long John’s crutch—together is the fact that they all hint at and ultimately illuminate anxieties about these assemblages, their owners, and their viewers. Simply put, these objects are interesting because of what they reflect about both their owners and their beholders and the contexts that these are (or aren’t) used in⁴³. In becoming aware of what the historian Asa Briggs has termed “a consciousness of things” (32), Jim can be read

⁴³ Asa Briggs suggests in *Victorian Things* that part of the fascination with objects stems from studying how “they were used and appreciated within their own context” (14).

as not only thinking about objects but also what those very same objects say about the choices others have made with their lives. Furthermore, Jim's observation of objects proffers him the emotional freedom to think about his life away from the comforts of home. In reading the object, Jim can give way to the expression of feelings of fear, terror, and even shock, both onboard the ship and on shore. Looking at how others uses objects teaches Jim how to control his own over-anxious imagination, an important part of Jim's continued evolution. The objects Jim himself encounters during his travails provide a brief mental pause necessary during the most harrowing processes of adventure. This pause permits him to consider his current surroundings and what his plans for the future are.

Interactions with the object can cause anxiety but also leads to increased mental stimulation and temporary physical restoration. Jim's work with and reading of objects makes him develop actual physical skills but more importantly aids him in developing creative and critical thinking skills that aid him in considering objects and what they signify⁴⁴. Working with the object allows for the rapid pace of adventure to temporarily slow down, producing not only a brief physical respite but also a time to observe. In observing, Jim notes his response to objects and considers how to gradually use these observations in order to learn more about both himself and the people who surround him (Turkle 303). At the same time, Jim's imaginative interactions with the object produce an important safety zone otherwise lacking during the process of adventure. This space procures

⁴⁴ As Sherry Turkle notes in "Objects Inspire," the imagination "is [sometimes] fired by an object" especially as "relationships with objects have much to do with family, friendship, home, love, and loss" (297).

him a chance to further develop the fluidity of his thoughts. Thinking about objects and what they signify gives Jim a chance to, in the long run, mature as both an individual and as a member of a structured, orderly society. Consequently, Jim's experiences with objects enables him to learn more about the impracticality of his travel and fortune related fantasies while at the same time teaching him ways to cope with his anxieties.

As Jim grows in his speculative powers, he starts to experience one of the strangest problems of adventure, namely, the occasionally jarring separation of mental processes and bodily activity⁴⁵. In Chapter 26, as he considers how he will recapture the *Hispaniola* and neutralize Israel Hands, the sole remaining pirate onboard, he notes that there seems to be a disconnect between body and mind: "While I was thus *turning the business over in my mind*, I *had not been idle with my body*. I had stolen back to the cabin, slipped once more into my shoes, and *laid my hand at random* on a bottle of wine, and now, with this for an excuse, I made my reappearance on the deck" (138, emphasis mine). Here, in a possibly ironic moment, the process of introspection seems to have so completely absorbed Jim that he moves about the ship like an automaton, without any type of consideration as to his actions. Caught up in this abstruse moment of intensity, there is no time for the body to be idle, no time for Jim to relax or think about the automatic actions of retrieving a bottle of wine. In particular, this moment starkly contrasts those

⁴⁵ Here, I am indebted to John Plotz's 2013 MLA talk that discussed the problems of this separation in the work of Charles Dickens. I also note that the early twentieth century French critics Marcel Schwob and Jacques Rivière briefly discuss this state of interiority or mental abstraction in Stevenson's works but do not significantly dwell upon it.

where Jim has previously thought with great intensity and concentration about the adventure at hand. Likewise, Jim raises the problem of concentration elsewhere, noting that in another moment, he “had heard the sound of loud voices from the cabin, but to say truth, my *mind had been so entirely taken up with other thoughts* that I had scarcely given ear. Now, however, when I had nothing else to do, I began to pay more heed.” (122, emphasis mine). Jim can be seen here as again caught up in a unique situation, unaware of the current state of the actions of his physical body, so intensely occupied in thought that while he acknowledges that he heard the sound he is unable to do anything about it. In other words, his mind is too busy. Once he is able to reach a decision, he finally becomes able to slow down, once there is “nothing else to do.” Only then can he finally pay attention, once more whole with this reuniting of mind and body. In some respects, this echoes the way that Doctor Livesey goes about the process of adventure in the novel: “It is something to have been an old soldier⁴⁶, but more still to have been a doctor. There is *no time to dilly-dally* in our work. And so now *I made up my mind instantly*, and with no time lost returned to the shore and jumped on board the jolly-boat”(85, emphasis mine). Both professions practiced by the Doctor, soldier and doctor, do not allow him the luxury of thinking about his choices. Instead, he must act “instantly,” which in this case, saves his life. Much as Jim’s rushed decisions, like the Doctor’s, typically turn out well, the moments where he must pause, “pay heed,” and judiciously reflect generally ease him away from making choices that could put him into even greater danger. Stopping “to pay heed” (122) allows Jim,

⁴⁶ The Doctor served on the British side against the Stuart forces at the Battle of Fortenoy under the Duke of Cumberland.

and the Doctor, too, the opportunity to “stare and wonder” (128), which in turn refreshes the imaginative powers, almost as important as physical strength.

I suggest that this insistent emphasis on and return to the introspective process marks a key turning point in the adventure subgenre. The process of adventure does not typically allow its protagonist the chance to linger, to think more rigorously about the connections between body and mind, or to pay heed to the adventure at hand and the elements that construct it. Again and again⁴⁷, Jim rushes into decisions, relying upon his education, previous assessments of the personal character of others, and rapid fire evaluations of the physical dangers of the situation. These moments of introspective pause beg the narrator and reader alike to slow down, to pay more attention to the scene of action and the ways that objects are used (or not used) in these contexts.

Jim’s imagination, when affected by his interactions with objects, allows him an ability to complete his epic tasks. The heightened powers of the imagination in responding to objects eventually allows Jim to return to a state of child-like innocence as he briefly finds happiness sorting through the many different types of money (187) that make up the bulk of the pirate treasure once it has been found. Despite Jim’s initial immaturity and his preparation for interactions with others and their objects, he is able, primarily due to his innate common sense, to both quickly adapt to new settings and to process information. By the conclusion of his adventures with people and objects in *Treasure Island*,

⁴⁷ See chapters 15, 22, 23, 24

Jim has, through his encounters with the object, been simultaneously trained for a life of thought and a life of physical labor.

LEARNING ABOUT OBJECTS AT HOME AND AWAY:

THE LESSONS OF *KIDNAPPED*

Kidnapped (1886) marks a new shift in Stevenson's manipulation of the expectations and tropes of the adventure-romance. Unlike the immature Jim Hawkins, David Balfour, the narrator of *Kidnapped* immediately emerges as an opinionated young man, filled with certitude and common sense. Like Jim, David has to learn how to control his own over-active imagination, how to react to objects, and how to interact with others. Both novels use objects as a starting point for adventure. In *Treasure Island*, Jim had to be taught how objects could be manipulated by others but here, in *Kidnapped*, David must also learn how objects can be read as signifiers of both personal/familial identity and a greater national/cultural history. It is not until David begins facing adversity and starts to struggle with the puzzle of the object that he transforms into a truly dynamic character. If Jim's journey teaches him more about how to judge character (including his own), an important motif in the adventure subgenre, Significantly, David's journey—particularly in the period when he is known as “The Lad With The Silver Button”—teaches him more about both his own character and two additional topics he initially knows little about: the history of his own family and the history of his nation.

Kidnapped, set in the wake of the '45 rebellion, centers on David's journey to establish his place as the rightful heir to the estate of Shaws. He has been raised in humble circumstances and is unaware of his position until the death of his

parents. After an unsuccessful meeting with his miserly uncle, David is lured aboard a ship bound for America, the *Covenant*. A sequence of accidents aboard ship ensures that David meets the Jacobite partisan Alan Breck Stewart. The two are separated but reunite before enduring several hazardous adventures in the Highlands that allow David to learn more about the severe depredations the Highlanders endure. By the end of the novel, David and Alan have returned to Lowland Scotland and Alan has assisted David in confirming his identity as the rightful heir.

In moments of joy and danger both, David Balfour is placed in situations where he learns to better understand and interpret the significance of objects. I read *Kidnapped* as looking at moments where notions of property and value are no longer stable. David might not be able to initially answer questions relating to the political, the historic moment, or even his own family's affairs, but an encounter with objects and the people who temporarily possess them provokes his curiosity. The inward adventure of meditation, brought about by brief exposures to objects while in unusual or precarious settings, brings David fleeting moments to explore why he believes what he does before reverting to the safety of his previously held positions (Calder vii-ix). David extensively evolves during his regular meditative examination of the small objects that are so vividly described throughout the novel (Calder xi). For David Balfour and for the reader, the ideas associated with and reflected by objects are pieces in a complex and shifting puzzle of personal and cultural attitudes.

David's progression towards knowledge is not easy. As he journeys, he learns the hard way, according to Jenni Calder, "that survival requires more than

pragmatism and a belief in rational behaviour. He confronts people who behave in a way quite outside his own experience. He is drawn into a network of feelings and actions in which conventional morality is ineffective, or seen to be shallow. It is like a nightmare” (Calder viii). For David to successfully negotiate the “nightmare” of his Highland adventure he must learn how objects work and how other people “quite outside his own experience” understand objects. David’s travels and his interactions with others may be read as an attempt to open up discourses about difficult social issues that readers might otherwise resist: class difference, morality, the importance of knowing history. David inwardly considers the socio-political position of the Highlanders, continually and consistently referring back to his own belief in “rational behaviour” (Calder viii). His relationship to and in Highland society is reconfigured, ultimately contingent upon his relationship to and with objects, especially objects given to him by others. Throughout the course of *Kidnapped* David’s adventures are heightened by his responsive engagements to and with objects, leading him to a further development of interiority.

From the very beginning of the novel, David encounters objects. On his way to begin a new life after he is orphaned at the house of his uncle, he receives a package containing several gifts. These gifts offer lessons for David that will aid him in his efforts to make his own way in the world. The “little packet which contains four things” (3) also includes very precise instructions regarding their use. While Reverend Campbell, the giver of this packet, acknowledges that the first item in the packet is David’s “legal due,” the money for his father’s property, the

other items require more specific instruction in their use. In a letter to David the Reverend Campbell advises that these items are curious ones:

[t]he first, which is round, will likely please ye best at the first off-go; but, O Davie, laddie, it's but a drop of water in the sea; it'll help you but a step, and vanish like the morning. The second, which is flat and square and written upon, will stand by you through life, like a good staff for the road, and a good pillow to your head in sickness. And as for the last, which is cubical, that'll see you, it's my prayerful wish, into a better land. (3)

The riddle-like descriptions of these objects contains multiple cautions against overuse, warning that the objects are “but a drop of water in the sea” that will “vanish like the morning,” but these descriptions can also be read as offering hope for the future. These objects offer a short-lived fantasy for David and the reader that falls apart in the act of unpacking. David learns that the round object is a “shilling piece,” that the “cubical” shape is a “little Bible,” and that the third gift is a recipe for a folk remedy, “lilly [sic] of the valley water⁴⁸” (4). David’s pensive exploration of the gifts coupled with his education and common sense ultimately reveals him to be fully capable of using these objects. The minister’s instructions and warnings are important because they essentially instruct David in how to be thoughtful about seemingly inconsequential objects and how to preliminarily read them for value. Reading the instructions of Reverend Campbell and unpacking the parcel gives David a much-needed space for meditation where he can consider the past and future and what his own place in the world is. This meditative moment is

⁴⁸ A popular folk remedy for digestive ills, urinary tract problems, and cardiovascular disease. Fanny Stevenson, an avid gardener, discovered this recipe to her husband’s delight, according to her “Prefatory Note” to the Louis Rhoad illustrated version of *Kidnapped*.

important because it teaches David that objects matter because they can remind us about the past and what we have lost.

David's musings in this moment when he has first truly encountered the object also remind us that objects can stir the imagination. Why else do we keep thinking about objects, using them, redefining them, scrutinizing the stories that they have been a part of? Objects continue to seduce because they allow imagination free rein without constraint. Throughout *Kidnapped*, David demonstrates that he is not the type of young man to normally allow his imagination to run away with him. He is practical, sensible, educated, and willing to look carefully at any evidence presented to him. He is brimming with self-confidence and filled with "common-sense" (123). Later, confronting evidence such as keys, locked chests (23-24), a book with an inscription from his father (18), a musty bedroom set (14), and an unfinished staircase (21-23) allows his imagination to roam free as he learns more about his complex familial history. David might be able to eventually prepare himself physically and mentally to confront his murderous uncle but he is unable to similarly prepare to meet the challenge of the object because it overwhelms the senses and the imagination. Without the training offered by others (Reverend Campbell and later, Uncle Ebenezer, Captain Hoseason, and Alan Breck Stewart), David risks his imagination growing stagnant.

THE DANGEROUS DISTRACTION OF OBJECTS

David's initial journey takes him to Shaws, the estate controlled by his uncle Ebenezer, where he hopes to establish himself⁴⁹. Ebenezer, a strange and miserly man, is unwelcoming at best. He directs David to spend the night in a tower room only accessible via an unfinished staircase. After discovering his danger in the nick of time, David thinks of spending the night in another room that was once richly furnished but is so overwhelmed by the dust and mold prevalent in the room that he leaves, returning to the kitchen and its comforting fire. He arms himself and spends the night sleeping atop yet another great chest. In the morning, David confronts Ebenezer, who excuses his actions by claiming that he was unaware of how to respond and react to David's story. David does not completely believe Ebenezer but is temporarily lulled into complacency by his uncle's emotions and by his own shock at seeing a book with his father's signature. Ebenezer reveals that David's father Alexander was the rightful heir but gave up his claims to marry David's mother. Ebenezer then invites David to journey with him as he pursues his business interests.

In visiting the nearby town of Queensferry with his uncle, David's common sense is overwhelmed by the many sights the seacoast town presents. In this moment, David briefly forgets all he has previously endured during the speculative moments when his imagination runs rampant. Captain Hoseason, a friend of Ebenezer Balfour, David's uncle,, takes advantage of David in this moment, smoothly promising delivery of gifts "from the Carolinas [...] [...] A roll of

⁴⁹ David, an orphan, throws himself here on the mercy of strangers, even though they are family. He is not yet aware that he is the rightful heir to the estate and that Ebenezer will continue to cheat him of his inheritance.

tobacco? Indian feather-work? a skin of a wild beast? a stone pipe? the mocking-bird that mews for all the world like a cat? the cardinal bird that is as red as blood?—take your pick and say your pleasure” (35). This listing of only slightly and intermittently connected objects overwhelms David. The potential use of these objects in “traditions, magic and ritual” (Mauss 22) violence elevates David’s imagination. Here, the promise of objects—furs, pipes, pet birds—establishes the idea that there will be a “transfer[ring] of a possession” (Mauss 23), that establishes a “bond between persons” (Mauss 23), in this case, David and Hoseason. The bright colors that the cardinal and feather-work suggest, when accompanied by the luxuriant qualities of the roll of tobacco, the stone pipe, and the skin of a wild beast, vividly contrast the desolate familial objects that David has recently experienced at Shaws. Caught up in the throes of imagination, David easily succumbs to the pleasurable speculative thoughts that the objects described by Hoseason so readily invite. David’s pleasurable musings are especially problematic when viewed through the lens of Calvinistic materialism. In listening to the promises of Hoseason and considering the objects described so seductively, David gives in to temptation rather than choosing to continue in his sufferings and thus proving himself worthy of being part of the elect. While this is all a completely natural response for a young man who has recently lost his family, David’s joy at considering Hoseason’s descriptions of objects works to show his naiveté about the object and what it might signify. All of these items are associated with the dangers of the unknown. Additionally, these objects, removed from their original settings, are at best markers of status, separated from their original use-values. Calvinistic materialism does allow for the possession of objects but those

objects must operate as signifiers of the possessor's status as a believer and must also highlight the possessor's abilities to serve as a good, faithful steward of resources. Nothing about David's actions as of this point in the novel indicate his abilities as a steward. David's greedy daydreams here are completely natural but also prove to be his downfall. Hoseason's friendly manner offers a comfort to David as he speculates on the list of wondrous possibilities afforded by these objects, all of which could serve as markers of status. David ignores the threats to his physical safety in his happy musings and goes aboard the *Covenant*⁵⁰.

Once aboard, he is literally knocked "senseless" (36) having already been figuratively knocked senseless by the litany of objects described by Hoseason. David eventually recovers and learns that his uncle has ordered Hoseason to forcibly transport him to the American colonies as an indentured servant. David's journey on the *Covenant* is short, thanks to a rapid sequence of events, but he still has enough time to gradually learn that the officers of the *Covenant*—those men that he most frequently comes into contact with—have a variety of all too human weaknesses, particularly greed, a weakness only enhanced by their own individual encounters with the object. Coming into contact with the officers of the *Covenant* forces David to consider his situation, which includes dealing with his anxieties about his current precarious position, the roughness of the varied members of the

⁵⁰ Given the fact that the *Covenant*'s crew is made up of abusive drunkards, gamblers, and killers Captain Hoseason's devotion to his mother (37-38), generally puritanical habits, and deep love for his ship (66-67) all stand out in stark contrast. Here, Stevenson seems to be enjoying a small private joke about the Covenanters, who while deeply convicted of their opinions regarding church doctrine were not always above violating divine commandments regarding the sanctity of human life during their militaristic pursuits. The tension between these two incredibly polarizing positions is worthy of further research.

Covenant's crew, and just what his place is, either with the crew, at home in Scotland, or abroad in America. He quickly learns that danger and anxiety are all around in the limited space of the *Covenant*. Further close observation of the *Covenant*'s officers demonstrates that they are unable to offer competent guidance on how to deal with either the attractive possibilities the object offers or the very clear and present dangers of real life. David is left on his own to ponder both his own possibilities and those of the many objects aboard ship.

At this stage, another problematic guide enters David's life. The *Covenant* runs over a small boat ferrying the Jacobite partisan Alan Breck Stewart⁵¹ to a waiting French ship. The officers, especially Captain Hoseason see Alan, the sole survivor, as physically and politically dangerous. David learns of a plot to kill Alan, warns him, and then participates with him in a battle with the *Covenant*'s crew. Pleased by David's actions, Alan makes David a gift of "one of the silver buttons from his coat" that were, in turn, a gift to him from his "father, Duncan Stewart" (64). Alan intends the button "to be a keepsake" but also informs David that "wherever ye go and show that button, the friends of Alan Breck will come around you" (64). Alan's proclamation indicates that the button has a history rich in signifiers. Importantly, the gift of the button can be tangibly held but its true significance rests in its status as a powerful and fixed reminder of a common shared experience. The silver button serves as a dramatic counterpoint to the wild and ultimately empty promises of Captain Hoseason.

⁵¹ Interestingly, Alan Breck Stewart is also a deserter from the English army, having abandoned his post at the Battle of Prestonpans (70).

David's imagination does not have to fill in the blanks about what this object signifies to the Srewarts as Alan is initially nearby, able to explain his poignant gift and what it signifies to him about his family's history. A family heirloom, the gift of the button is the gift of "a part of [him]self" (Mauss 23) and represents not only his familial history but also his personal history, pre-David. The button is not a simple nostalgic memento to be transferred to David but is instead a gift signifying "a part of someone's spiritual essence" (Mauss 23). The spontaneous gift of the button following the fight in the round-house allows Alan to recognize David's assistance in a very real and material fashion. Here, the gift of the button signifies both the bond between Alan and his father but also the forging of a new bond between Alan and David⁵².

WHO'S GOT THE BUTTON?

Even after Alan briefly explains the gift of the button, David remains unaware of the significance this small silver button has. For David, the button is simply a button: seemingly without purpose, a mere memento of his first adventure with Alan, separated from its original purpose of decorating Alan's coat. It is not until David is washed off of the *Covenant* during a storm following the fight in the roundhouse that the situation changes. His perilous (and solitary) adventure on the isle of Earraid offers him the chance to more thoughtfully reflect

⁵² Read through the lens of Mauss, Alan must offer a gift because the "recipient has a sort of proprietary right over everything which belongs to the donor. This right is expressed and conceived as a sort of spiritual bond" (Mauss 24). Alan, generally loath to express feelings, uses the gift of the button to acknowledge David's accomplishments during the struggle against the *Covenant's* crew. Yet he cannot immediately acknowledge David in the exuberant Scottish song of celebration that he bursts into in the aftermath of the fight (52-54).

upon both his own past and the gift of the button. Yet David refuses to completely investigate the complicated interstice of the object and adventure. Looking back at this period, he states that this avoidance is because

[t]he time I spent upon the island is still so horrible a thought to me, that I must pass it lightly over. In all the books I have read of people cast away, they have either their pockets full of tools, or a chest of things would be thrown upon the beach along with them, as if on purpose⁵³. My case was very different. I had nothing in my pockets but money and Alan's silver button; and being inland bred, I was as much short of knowledge as of means. (83-84)

David has no books, no pockets full of tools, and certainly no chest of things to rely upon in this scene of horror. In this moment the one specific object that he does mention is Alan's silver button. But David is still "short of knowledge as of means" and cannot figure out how to adapt the button to new uses. He is not yet capable of moving beyond the trauma of this most recent setback or of utilizing his imagination. Stuck on the island, alone with his button, David is rendered temporarily incapable of either physical or mental adventure. On the island, the button is functionally useless as a physical object but it can operate at least as a metonymic signifier for all that David has lost.

Eventually, David leaves the island and makes his way across Scotland, receiving the aid of several people who recognize him as Alan's friend, "the lad with the silver button". These encounters with others suggest to David the importance of Alan's gift. The familial and cultural histories of the Appin Stewarts are neatly wrapped up in the button, ready for reading by those who know the significance of this particular object and its back story. The signifiers imbued in the silver button enable David to associate and interact with people that he would

⁵³ Stevenson comments on this popular trope in adventure literature in "A Gossip on Romance."

otherwise actively choose to avoid. On Earraid or later in the heather, when David reconnects with Alan the button truly stands out. On the run, David learns about the complicated history of the clans and the Stuart uprising from Alan, which makes the button even more difficult to comprehend. The button, gifted to Alan by his father Duncan and now linked to a story (69-70) about Duncan's display of swordsmanship before King George II and the Duke of Cumberland, becomes caught up in the complicated history of Scottish politics. Ultimately, the button, while not actually gifted to Duncan by the Hanoverian monarch, serves as a powerful token of the perplexing situation that befell so many Scots when forced to choose between the Hanoverian and Stuart claimants to the throne⁵⁴. The button as repurposed by the Stewarts serves as a reminder of the ways that some families navigated the turbulent Scottish political scene of the eighteenth century, privileging the safety and security of themselves and their own clans over the Stuart cause. The button also serves as a reminder of the responsibilities that the Stewarts have as capable managers of resources. Duncan and Alan may be overly generous with their own resources but are (generally) very careful to not abuse the trust that others place in them⁵⁵. Here, the button ends in serving as a marker of stewardship and heritage.

⁵⁴ For more on the Stuarts and their attempts to reclaim the throne during the '45, see McLynn, Plank, and Speck.

⁵⁵ The one exception to this is when Alan gambles with David's money while they hide in Cluny's cave (43-45). (In Alan's defense, it would be considered bad form by the Highlanders to not gamble with Cluny, a powerful exiled chief.) While this episode succeeds at making Alan look foolish, it also allows David a chance to show his growth in learning how to navigate complicated interpersonal dynamics. The episode highlights the fact that neither man is perfect.

Ultimately, the button has to be used in an unexpected way, this time as a message to the illiterate John Breck Maccoll, a kinsman of Alan's who knows of the association between man and object. Before this "letter" requesting aid can be sent, however, another gift exchange must take place:

[Alan] fell in a muse, looking in the embers of the fire; and presently, getting a piece of wood, he fashioned it in a cross, the four ends of which he blackened on the coals. Then he looked at me a little shyly.

"Could ye lend me my button?" says he. "It seems a strange thing to ask a gift again, but I own I am laith to cut another."

I gave him the button; whereupon he strung it on a strip of his great coat which he had used to bind the cross; and tying in a little sprig of birch and another of fir, he looked upon his work with satisfaction.

(134)

When decorated with the button, the cross, this "little sprig of birch and another of fir," serves as a signal to let John know that Alan is nearby and in need of assistance. Again, David does not understand the significance of the button but can see that it is recognized in the community as representing a shared history. Alan takes the opportunity to explain to David the purpose of the decorated cross and what it will tell John about their position (134-136). The repurposing of the button as a message and Alan's shyness at asking for his gift back makes David more aware of the importance of this simple object as a part of both Alan's history and Stewart family history as well.

When John does finally arrive with assistance, Alan has to ask for the button back from him, a task he performs because the button is a memento of his own familial past. The button is a steadfast reminder for Alan of both the fact that it "was my father's before me" (138) and that his life has been saved, in the roundhouse of the *Covenant*, by David. The button represents the importance of both men to him because it is still "closely attached to the [gift-giving] individual,

the clan and the land” (Mauss 22). The button repeatedly changes hands, going from Duncan to Alan, from Alan to David, from David to Alan, from Alan to John, from John to Alan, and finally from Alan to David again. In spite of these many exchanges, the button is most associated with Alan and his political power. When the button is returned to David, he has begun to grow in his awareness of the button as both a signifier of the Stewart family’s history and the tense relations between the Highlanders and the forces of the King. But for Alan, the careful preservation of the silver button and its story suggests his high valuation of his father’s history. Duncan’s ability to stand up to the crown, his generosity, and his self-confidence are all things that Alan can be seen as continuing to aspire to. These aspirations are what mark Alan as a good man despite his status as an outlaw.

With the initial gift of the button, Alan clearly dissociates himself from the greedy and violent men of the *Covenant*. Yet the regifting of the button also distances Alan from the greedy and violent men of the Highlands. The gift serves as a reminder that while the button can smooth the way, preparing David for the hospitality of the Highlanders, he should also be on the lookout for greed and danger at all times. In giving away one of his few personal possessions, Alan reminds David of the importance of valuing the “qualities” of objects that “can suggest possible future uses or interpretations” (Keane 189), if the imagination is allowed freedom. This moment of regifting provides another lesson in how objects can be read for value. While the Reverend Campbell offered initial lessons in how to read what objects signify about personal values, his lessons, as followed by the harsh, moldy, decaying realities of Shaws and the unpleasant surroundings of the

Covenant and places like Cluny's cave in the Highlands, teaches David to instead read the object for signifiers of what others value. By extension, this process teaches him about what he most values. The silver button serves as a powerful talisman, reminding him to be more kind and considerate, to pay attention to others, their actions, and their stories. The silver button teaches David to be more observant in general and to restrain his initially harsh criticisms of both objects and other people.

CAUGHT UP IN THE COAT

David learns about value from other objects, too. When the two first meet, David sees Alan as "encumbered with a frieze overcoat that came below his knees" (49). If the button can be read as a signifier of Alan's past, his greatcoat can be read as a signifier of his present danger as a supporter of the lost Stuart cause. Writing in "Signs Are Not the Garb of Meaning: On the Social Analysis of Material Things," Webb Keane notes that clothing "has an indisputably intimate relationship to persons" (183). Alan is extremely agile, a good bagpiper and fighter, emotionally sensitive, a gambler, completely reckless and a bit of a poet, all traits that intrigue David. However, in the beginning of their relationship, David constantly thinks more about Alan's material objects—specifically, his French overcoat—than about the man and his character traits. David recognizes the coat as an object worthy of even more description, defining it as a "blue coat with silver buttons and handsome silver lace; costly [. . .] though somewhat spoiled with the fog and being slept in" (50). David, who has only recently started to think about the ideas of inheritance and property and what he values most about objects, notices the "silver buttons and handsome silver lace" but especially zeroes in on

the fact that Alan's clothes are "costly." In this moment, the coat denotes a primarily socioeconomic class conflict between the two men. David's reading of the coat as "costly" opens a space for dialogue between the two men to converse about the aftermath of the 1745 uprising,⁵⁶ differences between the Lowlander and Highlander cultures, the clan system, the support of the French for the rebellious Scots, and the continuous state of political unrest that David encounters during his travels. Here, the coat serves as a powerful symbol of recent political developments that have affected both men. I read the coat as a signifier of anxieties regarding personal safety, but also as a signifier of cultural loss post-Uprising.

David's initial reading of the coat proves to be flawed. The faulty imagination obscures David's understanding of the coat's significance. David is unable to recognize that Alan's coat is a French officer's coat, something that marks him dually as a traitor, both French and an outlawed Jacobite rebel. as an enemy, as an outlawed Jacobite rebel. Initially, David can only think in terms of monetary value when assessing the coat. Here, monetary value functions for him as a marker of taste. He chooses to ignore the fact that the coat also shows Alan's status as a professional soldier and that reading the man is far more important in this moment of encounter than (mis)reading the object. David decides that Alan is wealthy and a man of good taste and begins to awkwardly cultivate his friendship.

Webb Keane has observed that "[f]or both Thoreau and Marx, despite their obvious political differences, the misapprehension of material objects is not merely a mistake—it has grave consequences. It leads us to invert our values, imputing life

⁵⁶ A history that David seems both unfamiliar and uncomfortable with,

to the lifeless and thereby losing ourselves. The proper understanding of material signs has moral implications” (184). In the moment of initial encounter, in misreading the coat, David’s misapprehension of the material things causes him to invert his values. David alters his speech and mannerisms upon his first meeting with Alan. His efforts stem from a misguided belief “that a man with so fine a coat must like fine people” (55). Misreading the coat and what it signifies, David tries to fit Alan into a heroic mode that he has imagined. David’s behavior, in this moment, strikes Alan as strange and unbecoming. David has not yet properly developed a sense of interiority and in this moment of misreading is vastly more interested in forging relationships that can help him escape and secure his claim to his family’s estate. He completely misreads the situation that he has been caught up in and briefly loses himself.

Steeped as he is in Highland culture where “it is behaviour that denotes a gentleman, not dress” (Calder xi) Alan is taken aback by David’s behavior⁵⁷ in this initially awkward moment caused by David’s ignorance of the simple fact that appearances “can be misleading” (Calder x). After their adventure in the roundhouse, David’s further journeys with Alan gradually teach him more about what the object signifies about others and what it reflects about our own values and tastes can be quite different. David eventually learns with Alan’s help that he cannot truly assess the coat. He has to learn by trial and error to read the person inside, not the object-coat. In misreading the coat, he comes to value the lesson that

⁵⁷ David violates many of the Highland rules of hospitality and friendship during his initial encounters aboard the *Covenant* with Alan, who is affronted by David’s mannerisms, opinions, and shocking lack of knowledge of history(148).

the awkwardness involving the coat reveals: that he must be more careful about the assumptions that he makes about both objects and people.

WANTED MEN, WANTED OBJECTS

The coat reappears as a signifier of danger in a description on a wanted poster. I read the wanted poster as pointing towards the interesting problem of what objects tell us about other people and ourselves. The wanted poster challenges David, alerting him to the fact that a too close connection to objects can be dangerous. On the wanted poster, David is described as a "a tall strong lad of about eighteen, wearing an old blue coat, very ragged, an old Highland bonnet, a long homespun waistcoat, blue breeches; his legs bare, low-country shoes, wanting the toes; speaks like a lowlander, and has no beard" (137). Very little in this description identifies the essence of David. Descriptors such as "tall strong lad of about eighteen," "speaks like a lowlander," and "has no beard" suggest a fixed identity but these traits can actually be readily altered. The bulk of the description is given up to objects that David has long since distanced himself from. These objects are easily disposable, "old," "very ragged," "old" (again), and "wanting" (137). For David, the fact that he has changed his clothes is "a source of safety" (138). In reading the wanted poster, he sees a description that overly relies upon disposable material possessions. David's reading of the wanted poster begins to trouble the complex, menacing, fraught relationship between people and objects. He feels the danger of being hunted but also feels safe in the knowledge that he has separated himself from many of the objects listed as describing him. It may be difficult to spot the actual David now that he lacks the clothes described so carefully in the poster. The man, minus the objects, is very generally described

here, and only in the vaguest possible terms. Once again, the object (and its description of other objects) distracts from that which is most important.

Alan's reaction to the wanted poster is quite different. Alan admires his description because it marks him as a man of taste. When he reads that he is "a small, pock-marked, active man of thirty-five or thereby, dressed in a feathered hat, a French side-coat of blue with silver buttons, and lace a great deal tarnished, a red waistcoat and breeches of black" (137) he is pleased, even flattered. Again, this description is overly reliant upon what can be altered—in this case, specific objects, such as "the French side-coat of blue with silver buttons." The coat, here, signifies a combination of Alan's present and his past.

The clothing as described in the poster has ended up transforming both men during their adventures (Keane 191). David, whose clothing and shoes are broken and riddled with holes, is happy to remove himself from these damaged and dangerous objects but instead of celebrating his temporary moment of safety, he focuses on Alan, who takes great care to preserve his French coat⁵⁸. Alan's refusal to separate himself from his tell-tale objects enrages David who no longer sees these clothes as a marker of bourgeois gentility, instead seeing them only as a threat to their shared safety. In this specific case the coat has become "a danger" (138). Alan's inability to change the coat—a potent signifier of his stubborn personality and his love of risky causes—muddles the relationships between

⁵⁸ David does not understand during his frustrating speculations about the French coat's importance that it provides a form of safety should Alan be captured. Rather than being immediately executed as a deserter and traitor, he could instead be held for ransom by the French.

subject and object and the two men even further. Alan loves risk, but David loves safety.

Brought to a state of mental distress by two objects—the coat and the wanted poster—David mistrusts his friend's judgment. In his heightened state of anxiety, he observes that "if I were to separate from Alan and his tell-tale clothes I should be safe against arrest, and might go openly about my business" (138). In this instance, David is brought to a crossroads in thought, spurred on and fostered by the object. David's reflective thoughts, coupled with his anxieties and his newfound knowledge about the dangers lurking in the Highlands, starts an extensive examination of the complexities of his relationship with Alan. The wanted poster—yet another Stevensonian collection of objects—both highlights and reflects David's oppressive sense of danger.

In reading the wanted poster, David turns once again to introspection about objects to bridge his consideration of himself and his relationship with Alan. This process—brought about as it is by exposure to the object—reminds him of the multitude of dangers that he has already experienced and overcome. Throughout his adventures, David has already faced challenges to the social, cultural, and religious norms that he has been raised with. David's constant exposure to the problems of what objects signify in the Highlands compels him to rethink how the norms he was raised with may have been faulty or not fully developed. Reading objects results in the development of what Julia Reid has termed as an "adult rationality" ("Childhood" 46). David's reading of the wanted poster proves to be frighteningly evocative of the anxiety and danger of associating too much with objects. If the button and the coat have both been primarily objects suggestive of

imaginative delight, the wanted poster only accentuates the realities of danger. Put together, the button, the coat, and the wanted poster showcase the many ways that objects can reflect our own anxieties back at us.

In sum, Stevenson's personal and professional engagement with material culture illustrates that no matter how hard his characters try to define objects and just why they are important, the object remains elusive, ultimately generating more questions than answers. When read in this light, *Kidnapped* can be seen as his taking advantage of a new opportunity to put theory into practice, to play adventurously with objects and the stories that they tell. Learning how to read small objects such as the button and the great coat gives David the chance to learn about his own family, Scotland's complicated relationship with the past and how to interact with difficult people, all lessons that he appreciates but does not always take to heart. The objects of *Kidnapped*—be they the farewell package of the Campbells, the silver button, the great coat, or the wanted poster—all seem stable but are, in fact, multifaceted and flexible in the ways that they reflect David's anxieties about his own shifting status within various Scottish communities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Stevenson's keen investment in the complicated relationship between people and objects is most fully explored in his early adventure novels, specifically *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*. His works create a vital bridge between the moralistic tales created by Ballantyne and the Marryats and the outpouring of more heavily historical works favored by authors such as Doyle, Henty, Buchan, and Rafael Sabatini. Stevenson manages to fuse elements favored by both groups and, in the process, produces action-packed fare that also offers

object lessons in the development of a rich interior life. Stevenson's novels, especially *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, illuminate the importance of thinking more deeply about objects. The act of slowing down, of reading (or misreading) the object can reveal and reflect anxieties about both the self and the other. Most importantly, considering the lessons of the object generally suggests a comforting hope that anxieties can be eventually overcome. In *Kidnapped*, for instance, David gradually discovers how to deal with the complicated past of both his country and his family. By the end of the novel, he learns that the anxieties that he feels, especially those relating to socioeconomic status, still remain but he has developed ways to both manage his personal anxieties, keep his anxieties from manifesting to others, and how to ask others for help when he needs to. The object reminds him of his fright but also, in proving to be something worthy of further thought and examination, hints at a more restful, more secure future that is yet to come, if only he can hold out for a little longer against present dangers and tensions. Grappling with the object and what it signifies about others instructs the Stevensonian hero in how to more effectively manage the self. Weaving elements of extreme physicality with the thoughtful, deep-seated self-assessment of nineteenth century Calvinistic materialism Stevenson manages, with the object lesson embedded in his novels, to revitalize the adventure subgenre and readerly interest alike.

More than any other author associated with this type of work, Stevenson theorized both the adventure as a serious form of literature, examining the importance of representative depictions of material culture in the genre. Drawing upon his experiences as a voracious reader, experienced traveler, essayist, and poet, Stevenson also used his religious training and his educative background in

the law and engineering to think more extensively about material culture. Seeing objects as a source of anxiety but also as sources of comfort, Stevenson early recognized lengthy descriptions of objects in novels as important to the work of the imagination. Reflecting on the importance of the object in “A Gossip on Romance,” for example, shows Stevenson’s awareness of what the object can signify to narrative heroes and readers alike. Stevenson’s novels bear traces of the idea that while exposure to and possession of the object may take the possessor/holder with surprise and delight sometimes the emotional response to an object can just as easily be that of fear or dread. Learning to effectively and safely deal with the object can aid the narrative hero in becoming a stronger and more aware member of a large community. Objects may initially be distracting in these novels but they help in providing insight into what truly matters, namely, learning more about the people around us and how we can best live and work with them.

What matters most about the object in these novels is the emotional response of the imagination and what objects reflect about ourselves or others, once the imagination is stimulated. Speculating about the object allows the narrator and reader alike to speculate about their own place in the world. It is this thought-work, this interiority, that Stevenson— as both adventure writer and critical essayist — most privileges in the adventure. Rejecting the overt physicality of Ballantyne, Stevenson returns to the introspective moments of Defoe. Rejecting the overt moralistic lessons of both earlier authors, he instead suggests an alternative lesson, one that draws narrator and reader alike further into full participation as responsible citizen-participants of a greater community. The lessons of reading

both objects and men provide guidance through the novels, teaching skills in value, use, communication and survival, all crucial skills needed to fit this new role.

For Stevenson's young heroes, reading and misreading what the object signifies about others proves to be richly rewarding in teaching more about self-assessment, self-worth, and self-absorption. Watching and speculating about older men and how they relate to and use objects provides additional lessons in history, cultural and economic values, taste, use, and improvisation when resources are limited. But other lessons are also learned—the problems of pride, misplaced trust, the clash between the individual and the greater community. Ultimately, while both young men emerge from their adventures with broader perspectives of others, objects, and the world around them, they are permanently scarred by their encounters with objects. Instead of being associated with happiness, objects become tangled up signifiers of the most nightmarish parts of their experiences. Objects remain associated with a host of anxieties which both young men, while able to now manage, are never able to fully overcome.

In sum, Stevenson's fusion of techniques—drawn from earlier adventure, from realist authors, and from his diverse and far ranging interests in property law, socioeconomics, engineering, and the then emergent field of psychology—culminates in two novels that allow a fruitful exploration of objects. While Stevenson's contemporaries tend to focus more on geographical, historical, or violent physical highlights in their adventures, he stands out for his privileging of quieter, more sustained moments of thoughtful repose brought about by an engagement with objects. Jim and David may not end up completely happy or prosperous at the end of their adventures, but they end up with something much

more richly satisfying as a result of their object encounters: an ability to encounter their anxieties and intelligently reason through them. This encounter with objects in the Stevensonian adventure is, more than any other element present in his work, directly responsible for the development of interiority that proved so useful for later authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle and John Buchan.

CHAPTER TWO

“THE OBJECT JUSTIFIED IT. THE OBJECT JUSTIFIED EVERYTHING”:

ADVENTURING THROUGH THE SHORT STORIES OF

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

INTRODUCTION

Born and educated in Edinburgh, Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was, like Robert Louis Stevenson and John Buchan, a keen reader of both history and romance. His work closely connects with theirs, demonstrating the Scottish values⁵⁹ that regarded interaction with others and self-improvement as more important than the possession of objects. For all three men, while there is a comfort to be had in possessions, the possessor must still be an active and productive member of the community, unswayed from duty by the seductive call of the object.

Throughout his writing career, Conan Doyle’s fascination with objects and how people thought about, selected, used, and reacted to them surfaces again and again. Writing in popular magazines for a largely middle class audience Conan

⁵⁹ Although these values are primarily associated with the basic tenets of Calvinism they also bear traces of Scotland’s rich Catholic tradition as well. Stevenson and Buchan were raised in Calvinist faith traditions and were of solid Scottish ancestry while Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh but of an Anglo-Irish Catholic background. There are major distinctions between the two faiths but I suggest that the work of interiority and the types of “Scottish values” associated with material culture that I examine in this work are common to both. Despite his heritage and his religious upbringing, Conan Doyle’s exposure to Scottish culture and educational practices, both from the lively conversations at his mother’s boarding house and later at the University of Edinburgh (where Stevenson also attended), likely imbued him with the exact same cultural values relating to material goods that Stevenson, and later Buchan, possessed.

Doyle (uses glimpses of objects—a battered hat, a pigeon-carrying box, a plaster bust, an old coin, among many others—to consistently persuade his readers of his hero’s knowledge, all while simultaneously questioning that knowledge. This work of analysis and critique in Conan Doyle’s oeuvre differentiates his adventures from those contemporary writers privileging physicality, such as R.M. Ballantyne, Mayne Reid, and Captain Marryat. The tantalizing moments of encounter with both the everyday and the more forbidden object in Conan Doyle’s work stresses how thinking about objects, testing recall, and sharing and sharpening knowledge “blur... the distinction between inward and outward adventure” (Zweig 17). While Zweig’s point is an apt one, I propose that the inward adventure of speculation, of thinking alongside Conan Doyle’s characters about what objects signify about ourselves and about others is the most important work performed in the short stories surveyed in this chapter. These works obliquely ponder the social, political, and historical ramifications of an engagement with material culture at the costs of fellowship with other people.

The short stories I survey in this chapter represent Conan Doyle’s longstanding preoccupation with objects and the people who collect and use them⁶⁰. These stories— the critically understudied “That Little Square Box” and “The Jew’s Breastplate,” as well as the better known Sherlock Holmes tales “The

⁶⁰The adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Brigadier Gerard, and Professor Challenger and his colleague Lord John Roxton have long been popular with readers and critics alike but little attention has been paid to either Conan Doyle’s lengthy and ponderous historical romances or the many other short stories written over his prodigious career. I examine two of his independent short stories alongside two Holmes stories in this chapter.

Adventure of the Six Napoleons” and “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs”—mark the way that Conan Doyle dealt with a rapidly burgeoning material culture throughout his career. These stories, chronologically ranging from “That Little Square Box,” first published in December 1881 in *London Society*, to the last in my selection, October 1924’s “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs,” first published in *Collier’s*, uses a collection of objects to touch upon economic and social concerns that dominated the Victorian time period. Close readings of these stories showcase the way that objects highlight tensions and conflicts that might otherwise be ignored. The work of these short stories is not only to entertain, but also to make the reader think more intensely about objects, the narrator’s relationship to and with objects, what objects can tell us about their owners and far more importantly, ourselves⁶¹. The objects in these stories *seem* important but what is actually at stake is being able to see that objects are only legible as signs within the murky systems of human understanding. What ends up standing out in these stories is the connection between humans and objects, easily lost if one focuses too much on only observing the object.

The urge of Conan Doyle to focus on the development of interiority (or the inward adventure) marks him as a crucial link in the revival of adventure as a genre, placing him as a solid bridge between the adventures written by Stevenson and Buchan. Conan Doyle’s work follows Stevenson’s in reducing the outright privileging of the physical mode of adventure best expressed by Ballantyne.

⁶¹ This particular selection of short stories, in addition to emphasizing mental processes, all take place in enclosed interior spaces (the study, the public museum, the space of the home collection, and aboard ship).

Thinking more about objects and the way that Conan Doyle uses them in his short stories reinforces what we already know, or what we suspect we know, about these objects (Freedgood 2). Building on Freedgood's observation, I see the descriptions of objects in Conan Doyle's short stories as allowing for a safe testing of intellectual acumen, a testing that sometimes goes awry. To deal with an object and process what it might mean is in and of itself an interior adventure, one that constantly may change based both on what we know now and what we can remember about the past. Throughout Conan Doyle's oeuvre, objects are repositories of both the best and worst personal and cultural values.

In this chapter, I explore the idea that Conan Doyle's short stories offer distracting objects, ones that are so encoded with significations that they mislead observer and reader alike from noticing what's more important: the people most associated with those objects. As Elaine Freedgood has noted in *The Ideas in Things*, the reader "can brush by all kinds of things in novels, dismissing them with a brief and paradoxical acknowledgement: oh yes, the real, the literal, never mind" (10). The adventure, I posit, is a place where this type of reading happens far too frequently. We glance at the happy treasure trove found by Robinson Crusoe or the silver button presented to David in *Kidnapped* and never truly question why these objects are presented to us, fully and proudly on display. We brush by, or see, but we do not observe. While Conan Doyle fully embraces and emphasizes the representations of objects, he wants them to be thoughtfully considered by narrator and reader alike. If the adventure formerly emphasized an encounter with nature as a good test of physical prowess, this idea shifts by the end of the century,

especially in the works of Conan Doyle, where an encounter with the object that adequately tests mental prowess becomes what is most privileged.

Within this chapter, then, I argue that objects frequently appear in the adventure but they do not always directly invite our speculative inquiry. The objects of adventure are open for obsession, misreading, and can even be entirely overlooked. As objects became more mechanically reproducible and what we now recognize as Victorian commodity culture emerged, the writers of adventure offered rich considerations of cultural and personal anxieties, all carefully encoded within their depictions of objects. Shifting away from the physical to the work of the mind, the short stories of Conan Doyle offer insights into the tasks of the interior adventure which includes thinking more extensively about objects and what they can signify. Thus, I offer a close examination of the Sherlock Holmes story “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” that shows the titular objects as signifiers reflecting the racial and cultural values of their beholders, rather than just functioning as mere *objet d’art*. I also survey the lesser known “The Jew’s Breastplate” and “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs,” which both examine what can happen to the collector when they become obsessed and privilege objects too much over their relationships with other people. Finally, I turn to yet another understudied story, “That Little Square Box,” to tease out the very real dangers of misreading objects and people alike. Put together, these stories can be seen as further complicating the already murky relationship that exists between people and their objects.

Part of what makes Conan Doyle’s short stories so engaging is the fact that they are regularly peppered with commonplace mass-produced items that are

capable of our interpretation and misinterpretation alike. Reading objects such as pigeon carrying boxes, plaster busts, old coins, and even the clutter that haunts the Baker Street sitting room is possible, but only if we are fully willing to engage with them as repositories of personal and social values. In speculating about the object, “labor and speculative thought replace [physical] adventure as the creators of essential value” (Zweig 17). Ultimately, thinking about objects in the adventure, as well as what they signify and to whom, proves more rewarding than the actual possession of these objects.

The short stories of Conan Doyle privilege a well-organized home library, quiet conversation, daily newspaper reading, and the occasional trip to a museum or concert (public or private). The short stories selected here emphasize the importance of the mental experience (or interiority) over the physical, more exterior world of previous adventures, signaling a next stage in the development of interiority⁶². Instead of meditating in prayer and contemplating the soul in the Augustinian and Thomasian traditions or meditating on nature and the senses in the tradition of the Romantics, the late Victorians instead turned towards meditating on the objects that surrounded them and what these objects signified. Thinking about objects becomes, in this period, an acceptable substitute for the more traditional physical adventure⁶³.

⁶² The enclosed (and generally indoor) setting of these stories, as well as their emphasis on interiority, shifts the adventure in a new direction away from the more exotic and outdoor locales favored by other authors, including Stevenson.

⁶³ The knowledge gained and demonstrated by the narrators of these stories is meant (typically) to show them as good, considerate stewards of the resources that they already possess, which is an idea very much in keeping with the basic tenets

The process of fashioning the self, of going on a quest of the mind, of pursuing interiority, whatever we might like to call it, sounds simple at first, perhaps deceptively so. While elements of interior adventure certainly existed in earlier works within the adventure subgenre, I suggest that the unique privileging of interiority when considering objects in Conan Doyle's short stories indicates a development in the genre worthy of further inquiry. While the educated and middle-class male narrators of these short stories meet the criteria laid out by Paul Zweig of "the quintessential urban character" who "was mobile, unsentimental, cunning; he was self-reliant, good at taking risks, because his life was composed of risks" (102), they also actively pursue knowledge as a way to experience exciting bursts of heightened sensation⁶⁴ in more refined, domesticated spaces than previously seen within the genre.

Through their interactive engagements with objects, Conan Doyle's narrators find ways to embrace the Thomasian ideal of interiority as a desire to acquire knowledge of the self in an effort to become more well-rounded. In these stories, objects invite the reader to avail themselves of cunning and of self-reliance, but most importantly, they offer a chance to think more about what it might mean to take risk and to possibly be wrong in a way that may result in a greater understanding of the human condition. For these particular Conan Doyle characters, picking up objects, handling them, or even just looking at them can

of Calvinism. (An exception to this is Hammond, the narrator of "That Little Square Box.")

⁶⁴ I would suggest that this feeling of heightened sensation is closely akin to Virginia Woolf's "moments of being" or what Zweig has termed as "parentheses of unreal intensity, which descend upon us, transposing us into their wholeness and vanishing" (224).

promote curiosity and speculation about the blend that occurs between “the natural from the artificial” and the “material from the immaterial” (Candlin and Guins 2), crucial work for the interior adventure of fashioning the self. Thus, interiority is temporarily emphasized when working with or encountering the object. It is in the growth of knowledge, reflection, and being able to demonstrate what we know and how we know it that we truly become alive, if only for a fleeting glimmer of an instant.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE OBJECT LESSON: THE SIX NAPOLEONS

In 1904’s “The Adventure of The Six Napoleons,” first published in *The Strand Magazine*, a strange assortment of objects captivates the attention of Lestrade, Holmes, and Watson. For once, Lestrade suggests that Watson’s experience as a medical man is more useful than Holmes’s knowledge of the criminal world (924-925) in the solving of a series of peculiar burglaries (and a murder) involving the smashing of plaster busts of Napoleon the First. As Holmes and Watson chase down leads, they learn more about Hooliganism (925), fears of a Nihilist plot (933), Italian and German artisans (934-935) living in the heart of London, the Mafia (937), and problems with security at hotels (945), not to mention Napoleonic nostalgia⁶⁵ in the heart of the British Empire. While the cheap plaster busts of Napoleon produced by the Morse Hudson Company enable a discussion of racism, immigration policies, and employment difficulties among more astute readers, like Lestrade and Watson, the reader must know more about

⁶⁵ McGill University in Canada houses an extensive collection relating to Napoleon and has been in the process of digitizing the print portion of their collection. The online introduction to this digital collection notes that Napoleonic nostalgia is currently on another downward swing.

the object and its surrounding context first in order to fully participate in the interior adventure of this story. If peace and harmony is restored to society (minus murder victim Pietro Venucci), it is only because the object's many clues can be safely and correctly interpreted by those on the right side of the law.

Learning to think about objects is a lesson in thinking about ourselves and about others. Fully immersing one's self in a community of knowledge offers many challenges but also allows for a confirmation of the knowledge that one already may possess. Although Watson may occasionally needle Holmes for his seeming lack of more useful general knowledge, he recognizes that Holmes 1) takes the time to continue developing his knowledge and 2) that the knowledge Holmes *does* possess fills gaps in his own. Put together, Holmes, Watson, and Scotland Yard function as a highly developed and specialized symbiotic network, taking on the challenges of the odd and the extreme, mediating the potentially troubled (and troubling) intersections between people and objects. These components of this partnership eventually coalesce into a community of knowledge but the individuals that make up this community deserve some attention. Holmes by himself demonstrates a seemingly inexhaustible knowledge about objects but it is Watson that shows the most growth in how to observe the world around him and what objects might symbolize⁶⁶. Watson's willingness to

⁶⁶ In *The Storytelling Animal*, Jonathan Gottschall states that Holmes reasons backwards from "silent details" (101) and "the most ambiguous clues" resulting in a "neat, ingenious, and vanishingly improbable explanatory story" (102). Gottschall's frustration here with Conan Doyle is logical, yet his observation that like Holmes, we can also look at the world as full of stories is still a powerful one. As Gottschall notes, Holmes's knowledge allows him to look at patterns, to find meaning when it is unclear, even mysterious. Adventure and mystery may be all well and good in the short term, but as they continue, so does the mind.

embark on the interior adventure is what allows Holmes to triumph in story after story. Freedgood's observation that Holmes's "intense metonymic connections to and from things that commodity culture has made ridiculous and ridiculously admirable" (150) points out the silliness of many of the mysteries once Holmes has explained his methods. Holmes is addicted to objects⁶⁷—they are mysteries for him to solve that lead to even greater mysteries: people and their actions. Under his tutelage Watson, and by extension the reader of these stories, can be trained to more fully develop their intellectual acumen, to observe and not just see, to push boundaries about just what the object can tell us. Like Doctor Watson, we are all too willing to simply take the object's existence for granted, but in thinking through the stories that even everyday objects can tell, we learn that we can meditate and interpret, learning more about others and ourselves in the process. Once we know the steps, the path to knowledge seems an incredibly simple one. With the guidance of Holmes, Watson and reader alike can safely navigate the

Gottschall's work reminds us that "The storytelling mind is allergic to uncertainty, randomness, and coincidence. It is addicted to meaning" (103). We need to know what objects can do and why they are in our lives or not. Objects help us to use our mental faculties as we think our way to safety in an uncertain world, even if there are no other people around.

⁶⁷ These objects include but are not limited to the misplaced hat in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," orange pips sealed in mysterious letters ("The Five Orange Pips"), a watch, a blowgun's dart, and a metalwork box full of beautiful jewels (*The Sign of Four*), a chest filled with a box filled with "a crumpled piece of paper, an old-fashioned brass key, a peg of wood with a ball of string attached to it, and three rusty old discs of metal" ("The Musgrave Ritual" 605), "the queer lot of things" taken during the mysterious proceedings of "The Reigate Puzzle" and the golden pince-nez and coconut matting found in the "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez".

troubling world of objects without ever becoming completely overwhelmed (Freedgood 151).

Although Sherlock Holmes has many intellectual interests and knows a lot about many different objects, he does not always completely have all of the facts about objects at his disposal. While the hat in “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle” offers an immediate lesson in interpretation that is quickly proven accurate, certain other clues sometimes require more confirmation and more analysis. Holmes’s mind might be as richly developed as it possibly can be, but he is not an infinite storehouse of facts. In fact, he emphasizes to Watson, early in their relationship, the importance of only keeping information that can be of use (*A Study in Scarlet* 15). Thus, Holmes keeps a variety of different resources to supplement and inform his knowledge, including his network of street urchins allies in Scotland Yard, museums, libraries, and laboratories (for instance, *A Study in Scarlet* 8-10). But some of the most important resources for thinking more about what objects signify are those to be found at home in the private library and in the near constant clutter of newspapers, magazines, and journals. Holmes also learns from his conversations with Watson and other colleagues as well as through his methodical inquiries on behalf of his clients. The many questions of Holmes and his ability and desire to share his techniques are what propels the interior adventure of these stories forward. Holmes is a student of man (the brain, especially) *and* the object. Watching Holmes, Watson notes that part of Holmes’s success as a detective stems from the fact that he is “always ready to listen with attention to the details of any case” and can “give some hint or suggestion drawn from his own vast knowledge and experience” (924). Through observing Holmes in action,

Watson and the reader alike learn to be more observant of the object and to fully develop the mind and a supporting system of knowledge, thus opening up an important world of inquiry and adventure in the safe domestic space of home. Yet time and again it is Watson, not Holmes, who emerges as the one most aware of what objects signify about their owners. Watson watches and observes people first, then objects, while Holmes operates in the reverse.

The first clue introduced in “The Adventure of the Six Napoleons” is, perhaps, the most satisfyingly explained. Lestrade faithfully reports that the first entry in this sequence of crime was dismissed by the police because “[t]he plaster cast was not worth more than a few shillings, and the whole affair appeared to be too childish for any particular investigation” (925)⁶⁸. Two more smashings quickly follow, each progressively more violent, before a final smashing leads to a murder that must be solved. The smashed busts offer clues but also raise additional questions such as why these violent acts take place. What can plaster busts tell Holmes, and by extension, the reader? Why is ownership of a plaster bust of Napoleon I potentially problematic in the late Victorian period? And how does an

⁶⁸ Christopher M.B. Allison has theorized that busts are an attempt at “highly realistic portraiture” that, when successful, could allow owners and viewers to believe that they were looking at a powerful reminder of the “true nature” of the bust’s subject (paragraph 2). The popularity of busts in the form of heads, Allison asserts, is due to the fact that the head represents “where we do our thinking, speaking, listening, and where our emotions reveal themselves—the whole self in a small compass, as it were” (paragraph 1). The mass production and sale of small portable reminders of the great men of history allows for an owner and enthusiasts to not only decorate their home or office, but to also possess a small reminder of the past that dually serves as a conversation starter and as a happily fortuitous memory prompt. With rapid developments in industrialization, mechanically mass produced cheap replicas of more famous, more unique objects became more readily available for the nineteenth century consumer. Owning a bust, even a plaster reproduction, could be a powerful indicator of both taste and class status.

average, “trivial” (927), and uncertain literary representation of an object help us think about the fears, doubts, and concerns that were common to both the Victorian age as well as our own?

Examining the sequence of bust-smashing episodes and the progressive acceleration of violence is the best place to start with reading the objects of “The Six Napoleons” and how they can alert us to the knowledge that we must successfully acquire in order to navigate the world and our relationships with others. When Lestrade first reports about the strangeness of this particular sequence of crimes, he uses his notebook to recount that a shop assistant at the Morse Hudson art business “heard a *crash*, and in hurrying in he found a plaster bust of Napoleon, which stood with several other works of art upon the counter, *lying shivered into fragments*” (925, emphasis mine). The shop assistant runs out and questions witnesses but obtains no answers. The evidence is illusory, incomplete, damaged. All that remains are fragments of a whole “not worth more than a few shillings” (925). The only violence committed here in this moment is against property. The incident is a bizarre one, but not necessarily indicative of a greater threat to the safety of the community.

The second and third cases, taking place three days later, take place at two different locations associated with “a well-known medical practitioner, named Dr. Barnicot” (925)⁶⁹. Barnicot’s home, located near the Morse Hudson shop and the

⁶⁹ Dr. Barnicot’s status as “an enthusiastic admirer of Napoleon” with a “house full of books, pictures, and relics of the French Emperor” (926) is puzzling unless one considers that Conan Doyle was himself an enthusiastic Francophile obsessed with the history of the Napoleonic Wars. Chapters 9 and 10 of his 1906-1907 autobiography of reading practices *Through the Magic Door* deals with his

location of the first crime, is burgled and another bust is smashed. Another smashing takes place at his surgery. The crime remains a strange one, for both the reader and Inspector Lestrade, who reports that he is mystified and that there seem to be no “signs which could give us a clue as to the criminal or lunatic who had done the mischief” (926). Holmes quickly zeroes in on the idea that the busts are “exact duplicates” (926) of the Morse Hudson bust and Lestrade confirms that the busts were all “taken from the same mould” (926) of “the famous head of Napoleon by the French sculptor, Devine” (926). In a house likely furnished with more expensive artifacts of the Emperor, it’s boggling that all that is taken is a cheap, readily-available plaster bust. Throughout the recounting of these crimes, Watson and Lestrade theorize that these crimes are part of a cycle of madness, but are confused because “[y]ou wouldn’t think there was anyone living at this time of day who had such a hatred of Napoleon the First that he would break any image of him that he could see” (925), zeroing in on the idea that people, not objects, are what matters most. The object here signifies a dangerous personal violence that must be controlled and corrected before it threatens harm to people and not just property. The violence of the attack on the Barnicot bust (926) denotes an odd responsive engagement between a person and the simple, decorative, cheap, mass-produced object that piques the interest of both detective and reader. This bust can no longer be ignored—it signifies something to the person who owned it and the person who smashed it. The shivered, broken, splintered, strewn, smashed

enthusiasm for the Emperor, as well as his own vast collection of books, medals, and other artifacts relating to Napoleon I.

fragments of these busts demands more logical inquiry, a further pursuit of knowledge.

A fourth crime associated with a bust of Napoleon occurs at the home of newspaperman Horace Harker. This time, burglary has escalated into murder. Harker is stymied as to why these crimes took place, asking “[w]hy any burglar should take such a thing passes my understanding, for it was only a plaster cast and of no real value whatever” (929). Unlike Dr. Barnicot, who values the bust because of its symbolic reminder of Napoleon I and his career, Harker simply thinks of the bust as “cheap” (929) and “of no real value whatever.” Harker’s possession of the bust can be read as a quick and simple way to furnish his room with an object that’s expected in the home of a middle class Victorian gentleman. Like his neighborhood, which is “flat-chested, respectable, and most unromantic” (929), Harker, in his initial reaction to and reading of the bust, demonstrates a lack of imagination and knowledge about the object formerly in his possession. He must turn to Holmes, with his wider store of information, for a successful solution to the case. What’s left behind in the smashing of all of these busts is what is most frightening, what must be solved: the unknown. The whole object can be difficult to interpret but destroyed remains are even more frustratingly daunting. Examining each one carefully can offer some guidance but may not result in a complete picture. The object—especially the broken busts here in this story— seemingly demands attention. The uncertainty lingering in the minds of the viewers of the fragmented shards of the Napoleonic busts calls out for reason to intervene and determine why these random acts of violence have occurred. The object, in some ways, in this scene serves as a momentary distraction from the murder victim.

Holmes remains fixated on what the object can reveal about people and begins, with Watson's help, to chase down leads⁷⁰. Holmes starts to ask questions of the people who made and sold the busts. The busts may be "suggestive facts," as he says, but there are still too many questions and not enough answers (931). Accompanied by Watson, he retraces the busts to the stores where they were sold, but the shop assistant at Harding Brothers is no help and Mr. Morse Hudson himself is so "peppery" (933) that he gushes facts mixed in with his suspicions about plots. Watson records Hudson as a "small, stout man with a red face" and faithfully recalls his answer to Holmes's (unrecorded) questions:

Yes, sir. On my very counter, sir," said he. "What we pay rates and taxes for I don't know, when any ruffian can come in and break one's goods. Yes, sir, it was I who sold Dr. Barnicot his two statues. Disgraceful, sir! A Nihilist plot—that's what I make it. No one but an anarchist would go about breaking statues. Red republicans—that's what I call 'em. Who did I get the statues from? I don't see what that has to do with it. [. . .]How many had I? Three—two and one are three—two of Dr. Barnicot's, and one smashed in broad daylight on my own counter. (933)

Outraged by the invasion of his business and the destruction of his goods, not to mention the problem of having to interact with the police (or the agents of the police), Mr. Hudson⁷¹ quickly reveals typical concerns middle class merchants had regarding politics in late Victorian England⁷². While a more respectable member

⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Lestrade operates in reverse, turning to people and *then* objects, before ultimately returning to people.

⁷¹ Conan Doyle frequently recycles names. Mr. Hudson is no relation whatsoever to Mrs. Hudson, the housekeeper at Baker Street.

⁷² "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" can be read as drawing attention to the longstanding practice of bust smashing as a form of political protest dating back to at least the French Revolution. It was not uncommon to smash busts and statuary of politicians and public figures whose positions had become unsupportable. This practice continues and has been more recently seen with the destruction of public artworks celebrating Saddam Hussein (Iraq, 2003) and Colonel Qaddafi (Libya,

of society would recognize the bust as an object of art, Mr. Hudson's remarks confirm that the bust potentially has other, more political meanings as well. Angry at the failure of his "rates and taxes" to offer him more security, he refuses to recognize the generally stable political system that allows him to maintain his shop and his customer base. As the sanctity of his object has been destroyed, so too has his own sense of peace and well-being.⁷³ Mr. Hudson's statements of outrage and suggestions of plots, fused as they are with his remarks about his customers and his suppliers, suggest the object is a marker of underlying concerns regarding burgeoning immigration, increased crime, and the potential of political unrest.

Mr. Hudson's conversation moves Holmes and Watson one step closer to solving the case but also one step further away from returning to the safe space of their own home. While Holmes ponders the bits of information received at the shop of Morse Hudson on the way to the sculpture works of Stepney, Watson takes in the London that passes by them as they concurrently move through it. Watson's following observation shows him embarked on a journey of interiority:

[i]n rapid succession we passed through the fringe of fashionable London, hotel London, theatrical London, literary London, commercial London, and, finally, maritime London, till we came to a riverside city of a hundred thousand souls, where the tenement houses swelter and reek with the outcasts of Europe. Here, in a broad thoroughfare, once the abode of

2011) and Lenin (Ukraine, 2011). For more on the political role of statue smashing in the modern age, see Jones and Bannister.

⁷³ The short stories of Conan Doyle are set in a much more secular world. In this particular adventure, hints regarding a possible religious reading of the iconographic power of the bust are completely overlooked. There is a rich tradition of bust-smashing in fundamentalist religions, due to the idea that the sculpture is a form of unholy graven image. This tradition dates back to some of Calvin's most extremist followers.

wealthy City merchants, we found the sculpture works for which we searched (934). Here, Watson's touching description of the contrasts of the rapidly changing city shows a compassion for his fellow man that Morse Hudson, in his momentary outburst, lacks. The contrast between the tenement houses of the outcasts of Europe with the former abode of wealthy City merchants indicates the new realities of city life: crowded and unsafe conditions, less than ideal working conditions, and segregation from the more affluent, as symbolized by "fashionable," "theatrical," and "commercial" London. The squalor of this particular scene, with its "swelter and reek" is as suggestive to Watson as the shattered remains of the Napoleonic busts are to Holmes. These many different Londons and the souls that live there matter far more than any possible object can. But there is no time to linger with this notion while the mystery of the object continues to seductively beckon. Watson and Holmes progress onward to their next interview.

Inside the offices of the sculpture works, Holmes and Watson consult with the German manager, a model of efficiency and methodical business practices. He consults his record books, provides polite answers, explains the issues of cost and profit, and informs Holmes and Watson of how the busts are made out of plaster of Paris and assembled by Italian workmen. The manager also recognizes a photograph shown him by Holmes as one of a fired Italian workman named Beppo. Suddenly, the racial tensions of the radically shifting London that Watson has observed just lines before come into the forefront of the imagination of the reader as the manager describes the problems of employing Beppo:

I know him very well. This has always been *a respectable establishment*, and the only time that we have *ever had the police* in it was over this very fellow. It was more than a year ago now. *He knifed another Italian* in the street, and then he came to the works with the police on his heels, and he was taken here. Beppo was his name—his second name I never knew.

Serve me right for engaging a man with such a face. But *he was a good workman*—one of the best (935, emphasis mine).

The methodical qualities of the German manager stand out to Watson and Holmes in this reading of yet another object, in this case, Beppo's photograph. Here is a "good" immigrant, capable, efficient, eager to be a productive member of society and to be associated with "a respectable establishment". However, the craftsman Beppo, brought to Holmes's attention by the plaster busts and the photograph (representative of the shift from traditional artistic forms of representation to a more modern form), is the very type of immigrant that is the cause of Mr.

Hudson's seemingly irrational fears. Fighting with the police, committing acts of violence, and getting arrested at work all cause harm to the orderly community that the German manager is trying to assimilate into. More than the wild speculations of Mr. Harker, the quiet observations of the German manager point out the specific dangers of Beppo and his uncontrolled actions to the public's safety. Beppo is read by those who come into contact with him as dangerous, volatile, willful, and powerful—the very epitome of the least desirable type of immigrant. Yet Beppo has been good at his job, skillfully producing and reproducing objects en masse. The production and destruction of objects distracts from trying to determine more about Beppo and his motivations. Ultimately, Beppo's value as a craftsman is

shortchanged by his violent disruption of society in the form of his attacks on bodies: the real bodies of his fellow nationals and the symbolic object-bodies of the busts of Napoleon.

The conversations with Mr. Morse Hudson and the German manager reflect a shift in attitude towards immigrants that gradually took place throughout the nineteenth century. The living embodiment of *Punch's* popular cartoon representations of John Bull, Mr. Hudson, with his “small, stout” frame and his “red face and [. . .] peppery manner” (933) draws attention to the fear of political unrest of continental Europe as juxtaposed to (relatively) peaceful England. Worrying as he does about plots and respectability, his ownership and sale of the Napoleonic busts draws attention to the fact that major changes have taken place during a relatively short period of time. While the average Englishman may have feared Napoleon and his campaigns less than seventy-five years before, the later part of the century featured other fears in the form of rampant immigration of large groups trying to flee oppression and starvation. The responsible position of the German manager at the sculpture works, responsibly supervising the manufacture of busts of the Great Emperor and keeping good records, indicates that the French and Germans are no longer feared and that now, the borders are tightening against the more threatening (and more Catholic) immigrant incursion from a non-unified Italy⁷⁴.

Yet while all of this action unfolds, Lestrade and his Scotland Yard colleagues are tasked with dealing with the unknown murder victim left behind at Mr. Horace Harker's house. This man, “tall [. . .], sunburned, very powerful, not

⁷⁴ See Sponza.

more than thirty” and “poorly dressed” (930) is moved to the mortuary. What remains is the body of evidence left behind near his corpse and in his pockets. Lestrade observes “[a] long-handled clasp knife” lying near the corpse, which he cannot immediately determine as the murder weapon or not. He also finds in the man’s pockets “an apple, some string, a shilling map of London, and a photograph” (930)⁷⁵. Lestrade continues to track down the other clues left behind by the victim as Holmes and Watson use the photograph to follow the lead of the smashed busts. When the three reunite, Lestrade happily claims that he has discovered a connection between people and objects, telling Holmes and Watson:

We have an inspector who makes a specialty of Saffron Hill and the Italian Quarter. Well, this dead man had *some Catholic emblem round his neck*, and that, along with this colour, made me think he was from the South. [. . .] His name is Pietro Venucci, *from Naples, and he is one of the greatest cutthroats in London. He is connected with the Mafia, which, as you know, is a secret political society, enforcing its decrees by murder.* Now, you see how the affair begins to clear up. The other fellow is probably an Italian also, and a member of the Mafia. *He has broken the rules in some fashion.* Pietro is set upon his track. Probably the photograph we found in his pocket is the man himself, so that *he may not knife the wrong person.* (937, emphasis mine)

Here, Lestrade’s explanation begins to develop a safe interpretation of the crime.

This is not a crime that involves British suspects or even more respectable immigrants such as the German manager, but is an outside matter involving the immigrant community that threatens British safety. The “Catholic emblem round

⁷⁵ The photograph quickly proves to be the most telling object in this pocket full of objects. (Holmes ends up with this picture, which is the same one that helped him to find out more about the mysterious suspect from both Mr. Hudson and the German manager.) The photograph indicates an encounter with an exciting and still fairly new technology just starting to become less expensive, thanks to the efforts of entrepreneurs such as George Eastman.

his neck” on the corpse of Pietro Venucci serves as an object lesson for Inspectors Lestrade and Hill, reminding them of the dangers coming to London in the form of immigrants from Naples who are associated with the Mafia. The existence of a secret political society that targets people for death is a very real threat, as is the idea that Pietro might “knife the wrong person.” There is a certain grim and racist humor in Lestrade’s report. Pietro’s pocketful of objects and his rosary lead to his eventual identification and the solution of his murder but they also highlight the anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant views of established bureaucratic agencies (such as Scotland Yard) designed to protect a rapidly growing British middle class.

Once Pietro Venucci and his murderer have been identified, the mystery of the bust smashings must still be solved. Watson, in particular, continues to retrace the steps of the case and finds himself thinking about “the grotesque criminal” Beppo (938), who is finally arrested after a violent struggle⁷⁶. Beppo denied a chance to tell his own story in his own voice, haunting given the fact that he “could talk English perfectly well” (941). Instead, Holmes and Lestrade share how they solved the case by reading objects. Here, the object redirects attention away from the problems of people, distracting both the heroes of the story and the reader alike. The objects of the story—busts, photographs, and rosaries—all somehow seem more important than either Pietro or Beppo, even though they are not, because they disclose stories that cannot be otherwise told.

⁷⁶ Beppo is additionally described in this moment in animalistic terms that even further reduce his agency. Watson’s continued description of Beppo and his actions during the struggle sharply contrasts his sensitive, compassionate reading of London neighborhoods and their inhabitants (934). Here, Watson may be corrupted by the distractions of both the object and the witness testimony he has heard.

The climax of the story comes from Holmes's knowledge and his negotiations for the final remaining bust, which, after it is unpacked from a carpetbag, he purchases for ten pounds and smashes himself, revealing "a round, dark object" "fixed like a plum in a pudding," "the famous black pearl of the Borgias" (243). Holmes uses his "connected chain of inductive reasoning" to explain how the pearl, stolen from a hotel bedroom, winds up in the hands of Beppo, who hid it in a drying plaster bust and then went on his smashing spree to try to locate the hidden jewel. The embedded object within an object within still another object (the jewel inside the bust inside the carpetbag) ends up offering a solution to the murder and the rash of burglaries. While Holmes solves the case by later locating the last bust and its hidden treasure it is more intriguing that the stories of Beppo and Pietro are dismissed in favor of a story that the object suggests and signifies about the fears of the nascent middle class.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE COLLECTION AND THE COLLECTOR:

"THE JEW'S BREASTPLATE"

The next episode involving objects that I wish to survey in this chapter involves a more systematic collector who has long thought about the objects under his control, but has done so at great cost. While "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" offered a form of object lesson, teaching Watson—and by extension, the reader—to be observant about objects and what they signify about biases against other people, I read the museum adventure "The Jew's Breastplate"⁷⁷ as

⁷⁷ All citations for "The Jew's Breastplate" are taken from the collection *The Black Doctor and Other Tales of Terror and Mystery*.

offering yet another way to look at objects as signifiers⁷⁸. First published in February 1899 in *The Strand Magazine*, “The Jew’s Breastplate” allows Conan Doyle to return to the museum, a place he previously explored in the 1890 *Cornhill* short story “The Ring of Thoth.” Rather than setting his action in a large public museum (as he did in his previous story, which takes place within the confines of the Louvre), in “The Jew’s Breastplate” Conan Doyle instead chooses to think about the practice of collection, collectors, and vast arrays of objects in smaller, more intimate museums⁷⁹. “The Jew’s Breastplate” is narrated by Jackson, who

⁷⁸ Collecting practices flourished throughout the Victorian age, especially after the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. Writing in *Victorian Things*, Asa Briggs notes that for the Victorians, “[c]ollecting started at school and was encouraged. It usually began with shells on the beach or fossils from the moors or wild flowers from the hedgerows” (Briggs 47). The collecting practices of schoolboys thus developed into the enthusiastic amateurism now most associated with the small private museums of the Victorian collector. Collecting practices were vitally important for the Victorians and for their Enlightenment predecessors because the act of collecting, even something as small as shells, could train taste, inspire a lifelong and passionate enthusiasm for learning, and even teach prudence and thrift (Briggs 47). Moreover, a burgeoning interest in the Empire’s colonial possessions, minerals, animal life, and handicrafts, for instance, simultaneously developed alongside a rapid growth in cheap, widely available print matter such as journals and magazines. Both expansions developed a new aspect of curiosity, which Barbara Benedict has suggested is a way out of your place. It is looking beyond” (Benedict 2). The excitement of discovering hitherto unknown cultures and places could be carried on at home. One no longer needed to physically participate in a voyage of discovery. Instead, one could study the object and thus intellectually participate in the process of adventure.

⁷⁹ The Victorian parlor was packed with a wide variety of objects. Victorian journals were also regularly packed with a variety of treatises on how to collect and preserve insects, butterflies, various small mammals, coins, sculpture, paintings, and stamps. The practice of collecting during the Victorian period was one that privileged and highlighted a wide range of interests. The home museum, in particular, was a place where one could engage in quiet learned enquiry. The publication of a treatise on how to engage in the act of collection could offer an amateur enthusiast an opportunity to network with fellow collectors, trading information and thus adding a different type of value to the collected object other

learns more about his own observation of objects and the people associated with them by watching Professor Andreas, the outgoing curator of the Belmore Street Museum. The tension of the story rests in the role of the collector-curator dangerously obsessed with objects. Privileged throughout the story, Professor Andreas is expert in his field, interested in educating others, and ultimately, deeply shocked when his precious objects come to harm. The objects of the museum seem important but they distract Professor Andreas from the danger that threatens his beloved daughter.

In watching Andreas in a scattered collection over “fifteen rooms” made up primarily of exhibits from “the Babylonian, the Syrian, and the central hall, which contained the Jewish and Egyptian collection” (245), Jackson studies the ways that the collector operates as an aficionado of the object. The “admirable collection” that Jackson sees, scattered as it is, requires the collector’s sense of order, his enthusiasm, and his willingness to share insights in order for it to properly function. What truly surprises Jackson in the space of the museum is the amount of joy that Professor Andreas derives from his interaction with the collected objects, as seen here:

Professor Andreas was a quiet, dry, elderly man [. . .] but *his dark eyes sparkled and his features quickened into enthusiastic life as he pointed out to us the rarity and the beauty of some of his specimens. His hand lingered so fondly over them, that one could read his pride in them and the grief in his heart now that they were passing from his care into that of another.*

than monetary or historic value. For Conan Doyle, thinking about the collection of curious objects offered a happy opportunity to craft stories based on something that his readers likely would have already had some expertise with while at the same time toying with then-contemporary speculations about the development and training of the mind.

He had shown us in turn his mummies, his papyri, his rare scarabs, his inscriptions, his Jewish relics, and his duplication of the famous seven-branched candlestick of the Temple [. . .]. Then he approached a case which stood in the very centre of the hall, and he looked down through the glass *with reverence in his attitude and manner*. (245-246, emphasis mine)
Jackson, distracted by the sheer number of objects he is being compelled to

confront, zeroes in on Professor Andreas. Here, Jackson rightly recognizes that people are more important than objects and that he can learn more from observing Professor Andreas than he can in idly surveying the vast array of objects he finds himself surrounded by. For Jackson, the novelty of the museum does not stem from his contact with so many valuable objects, it stems from his chance to have contact with the collector.

The many objects in the museum (mummies, papyri, scarabs, inscriptions, and so on) blur together and overwhelm Jackson. He recognizes that these objects are special but seems unable (or possibly even unwilling) to respond to them himself without the aid of a guide. He is a vivid observer, much more interested in the living drama unfolding around the people in his life than the objects from the past, stored in the museum for the pleasure and education of their viewers. The actions of Professor Andreas, with his sparkling eyes, quickening features, and his lingering hands captures Jackson's attention, making Jackson pay attention to the way that Andreas treats specific objects. Andreas knows the collection, how to safely navigate it, and what the most promising and valuable pieces are. However, Jackson is more interested in viewing the Professor as a collector emotionally invested in the care of the objects under his protection, filled with "pride" and "grief" at what he has accomplished and what he must leave behind now that he has retired. Jackson sees and appreciates Andreas as an expert guide, a true

collector, one worthy of listening to. Throughout, Jackson's interest wanders from the subject to the collector, a significant move that highlights the fact that objects can overwhelm and distract from other more important considerations.

In *The Arcades Project*, Walter Benjamin's overview of the role of the collector suggests that the idea of order is an important one for the collector.

Benjamin writes that

[i]t must be kept in mind that, for the collector, the world is present, and indeed ordered, in each of his objects. Ordered, however, according to a surprising and, for the profane understanding, incomprehensible connection. [. . .] We need only recall what importance a particular collector attaches not only to his object but also to its entire past, whether this concerns the origin and objective characteristics of the thing or the details of its ostensibly external history; previous owners, price of purchase, current value, and so on. All of these—the “objective” data together with the other—come together, for the true collector, in every single one of his possessions, to form a whole magic encyclopedia, a world order whose outline is the *fate* of his object. [. . .] *It suffices to observe just one collector as he handles the items in his showcase. No sooner does he hold them in his hand than he appears inspired by them and seems to look through them into their distance, like an augur*” (Benjamin 207, emphasis mine).

The world of Andreas (the Belmore Street Museum) is like the one that Benjamin gestures towards in his discussion of the collector. For Andreas, this world is present in each of the objects that make up the museum's collection. The origin and provenance of all of the items in the museum give value and joy to Andreas, a joy that ends up permeating his discussion of the collection with Jackson and Mortimer. As Jackson observes Andreas speaking about and handling the objects of the collection, he sees him drawing inspiration from them. Andreas is able to more directly connect to the history of the past through his knowledge and the handling of the objects in the collection. This momentary glimpse of Andreas the collector, viewing his objects and providing a sense of order in an otherwise scattered environment is an invaluable and instructive one. The order that Andreas

provides to the objects is “surprising” and “incomprehensible” to Jackson, who initially only sees a jumble spread out over fifteen rooms. In his dual role as museum curator and professor, Andreas is aware of the “objective data” that Benjamin lists (history, price, value, and so on), especially for the objects that make up what he terms as his “own museum” (261). Yet what captures Jackson’s attention is the fact that Andreas, knowledgeable as he is about these objects, is still “inspired by them.” Jackson, observing Andreas, learns to appreciate the inspiration and the pleasure that Andreas derives from the objects that surround him⁸⁰ while he derives his own pleasure from watching the collector.

Realizing that this private tour marks an important change in the direction of the museum, Jackson records that “it was an interesting and a novel experience to have objects of such rarity explained by so great an expert; and when, finally, Professor Andreas finished our inspection by formally handing over the precious collection to the care of my friend, I could not help pitying him and envying his amazement whose life was to pass in so pleasant a duty.” (242) Again, Jackson is being trained to become more observant of the object in this moment, but at the same time, he is also being trained to become more attuned to the emotional responses of the people around him. As a result of his private museum tour, his interiority is deepening. He is able to recognize the rarity and preciousness of the

⁸⁰ The beauty of the titular object (twelve stunning jewels in a framework of gold) momentarily provides a focus for Andreas’s discourse and for the museum visitor. Andreas’s specialty in religious history allows him to give (mostly vague) background information about the role the breastplate had in religious ritual.

For more description on the role of the urim and thummim as part of the sacred vestments of the high priest, see Exodus 28.

objects that he has seen and can now also distinguish when he has encountered an expert. The biggest change is marked by Jackson's insistence that he "could not help pitying him and envying his amazement whose life was to pass in so pleasant a duty." Here, in simultaneously discussing both of the men that he is currently with, Professor Andreas and Ward Mortimer, he demonstrates that the private tour offered by the collector has made him connect with the objects in the museum and with them, heightening his emotional sensitivities in such a way that he feels pity, envy, and amazement. The language that Jackson uses to describe the objects in the museum is dry, exact, and even understated until he sees the object anew with the help of the collector.

Several days pass before Jackson returns to visit his friend Mortimer at the museum. In the meantime, Professor Andreas and his daughter have moved out, the regular security staff continues on, and a mysterious letter warning of attempted thefts has been received. Shortly thereafter, Mortimer discovers that the breastplate has been altered. Although the local police and an expert jeweler can see no evidence of harm, Mortimer and Jackson remain confused as to who could possibly enter the museum and why anyone would wish to harm such an important and rare item. After running through a listing of possible motives, including "monomania" and "anti-Semitism" (256), it becomes clear that the best thing to do for the two men is to secrete themselves in the museum and observe what happens at night. For Jackson, at least, the experience is instructive. He relishes being in the museum where

[i]n the cold white light of the electric lamps everything stood out hard and clear, and I could see the smallest detail of the contents of the various cases.

Such a vigil is *an excellent lesson*, since one has no choice but to look hard at those objects which we usually pass with such half-hearted interest. Through my little peep hole *I employed the hours in studying every specimen*, from the huge mummy-case which leaned against the wall to those very jewels which had brought us there, gleaming and sparkling in their glass case immediately beneath us. [. . .] *[M]y eyes would always come back* to that wonderful Jewish relic, and *my mind to the singular mystery which surrounded it*. *I was lost in the thought of it* when my companion suddenly drew his breath sharply in, and seized my arm in a convulsive grip. (9, emphasis mine)

Given his encounter with the expert in the form of the collector, Jackson's experience in the museum is now an entirely different one. Here, interested as he is in "the smallest detail," he finds the time and space to carefully investigate a wide multiplicity of objects. Away from people, he turns to the object for mental stimulation. The "huge mummy-case" is appealing but not as attention-grabbing as the jewels of the breastplate, especially now that the item's importance has been explained to him. Jackson finds himself drawn to the jewels as the result of what he terms as his studies, so much so that no matter what other wonders he sees, he continues to find both his eyes and mind traveling back to the specific object. Although Jackson is unable to physically interact with the jewels as Professor Andreas has during his tour, the process of thinking about them at all still offers a powerful form of interaction. Mortimer and Andreas may be attracted to the object through the host of "objective data" that Benjamin has identified but Jackson is drawn in by the "radiance" (258) of the object itself, as well as "the singular mystery which surrounded it." His vigil with Mortimer stands out because it marks the moment that he becomes more keenly aware of objects. Jackson's observation that the vigil "is an excellent lesson , since one has no choice but to look hard at those objects which we usually pass with such half-hearted interest"

(258) may be read as a critique of the Victorian museum-goer⁸¹ but also may be read as a self-critique. Jackson has previously seen the objects of the museum as blurred, with none truly capturing his attention, until Professor Andreas guides him in the direction of the urim and thurrim. Now, in “the cold white light of the electric lamps,” Jackson has no choice but to look at the objects and to think. His attention wanders, but now his attention wanders because he is engaged in thought about a specific object. Surrounded as he is by a Latour litany⁸² of delightful objects (the tomb-pictures, friezes, and statues), Jackson zeroes in on an object that stimulates his brain. Finally, Jackson can recognize the object as “wonderful” (he in fact does so twice in this passage), thanks, in part to the lessons that he has learned while observing the collector Professor Andreas in action. Jackson’s earlier observations of the collector and what the collector appreciates aid him in considering the many objects he finds himself surrounded by. Trained by the collector and now worried about the possibilities of danger, Jackson no longer

⁸¹ Visiting a museum in the Victorian era was a very democratic process. The Crystal Palace and the Kensington museum, for instance, deliberately appealed to museum-goers of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. *Punch*, the *Illustrated London News*, and museum directors alike occasionally bemoaned the democracy of museums, suggesting that museum visitors of inferior classes had to be more thoroughly trained in order to appreciate the wonders presented to them. This moment bears resonance when also considering the more modern museum-goer, especially in the wake of declining museum admissions and endowments. For more on museums in the Victorian age, see Barbara Black.

⁸² The term “Latour litany” has been coined by philosopher Ian Bogost to what he calls “the list of things in writing.” While Bogost is specifically referring to the many interesting lists of seemingly unrelated items that frequently occur in the writings of Bruno Latour, he rightly observes in both his book *Alien Phenomenology* and his “Latour Litanizer” website introduction that these lists can show up in other places as well. These lists are very popular in adventure fiction but can also be seen in other forms of writing throughout the nineteenth century, including newspaper advertisements.

gazes at the objects with “half-hearted” interest. Instead, he allows his eyes to roam and his imagination to freely wander.

Jackson has changed but the object is still in danger. The mummy case opens, revealing a secret passage from which Professor Andreas emerges. Mortimer and Jackson watch for a few moments, aghast, as the Professor uses “glistening” tools on the breastplate, leaving his mark on the object. Suddenly, watching the expert collector interacting with the object becomes too much for Mortimer, who yells for the security guard on duty and, with the help of Jackson, captures Andreas in action. The scene, filled with suspense and horror as established in the emergence of the mysterious suspect through the mummy case, quickly turns to one of awful distress as Jackson recognizes Andreas,

the very man who a fortnight before *had reverently bent over this unique relic*, and who had *impressed its antiquity and its sanctity upon us*, was now engaged in this *outrageous profanation*. It was *impossible, unthinkable*—and yet there, in the white flare of the electric light beneath us, was that dark figure with the bent grey head, and the twitching elbow. What *inhuman hypocrisy*, what *hateful depth of malice* against his successor must underlie these sinister nocturnal labours. *Even I, who had none of the acute feelings of a virtuoso, could not bear to look on and see this deliberate mutilation of so ancient a relic.* (259-260, emphasis mine)

The shock of seeing the man that he has put such great faith in profoundly affects Jackson. In thinking more extensively about the object, the collector, and their relationship he adopts religiously infused enthusiastic language. The sight of the professor, “reverently bent over this unique relic,” harkens back to the moment he first showed the breastplate with “reverence” (246) to Jackson. The usage of “sanctity,” “relic,” “profanation,” and “ancient,” all terms typically associated with religious sermons and canon law, affords Jackson a vocabulary to not only discuss the way he now views the object but also the shock he experiences in the wake of

seeing the collector harming an object that was previously under his personal protection. The museum should be a place of sanctuary, a larger, more modern reliquary devoted to the consideration and study of ancient things but in this moment, Jackson realizes that any sense of “sanctity” has been destroyed. The “hypocrisy” of the moment is “impossible, unthinkable.” Jackson is startled by the possibility that a man such as Professor Andreas, with such pride in his role as a museum curator that he refers to the museum as his own (261) private collection, could even think of damaging the breastplate⁸³. Jackson may acknowledge that he has “none of the acute feelings of a virtuoso,” but trained as he now is in thinking about the object, he can “not bear to look on and see this deliberate mutilation.” Jackson, like the Professor before him and like the Benjaminian collector, is beginning to cultivate the relationship between the collector and his objects as one enriched by knowledge, order, and fervor.

While theft or damage to the object is an obvious risk to the system of order in the museum, two other issues affecting the collector surface once Professor Andreas is allowed to explain himself and his actions: the reproduction of objects and problems in family life. The Professor has been breaking into the museum to cover the theft committed by his soon to be son-in-law, the “rascal” (264) Captain Wilson. Andreas, shocked to discover that Wilson is an expert on jewels as well as a thief, panics when he recalls that “some of the most precious gems in Europe had

⁸³ Interestingly, the idea of grouping things in a museum based on religious beliefs can be traced back to the Great Exhibition of 1851, according to Benjamin’s citation of Michel Chevalier (196). The purpose of such a grouping works to establish a system of order out of a vast array of objects, a system that is necessary in order to keep control.

been under *my charge*” (264, emphasis mine). In telling the story of his motivation, he remembers Wilson’s earnest desire to “have an opportunity of privately inspecting the various specimens” (264). For the Professor, this is a reasonable request as it shows Wilson to be a man of character, intellect, and curiosity. Once his daughter Elise is engaged to Wilson, he feels comfortable with leaving Wilson with “the free run of the place” and even states that “when I have been away for the evening, I had no objection to his doing whatever he wished here” (264). Happy at the prospect of having an intelligent son-in-law who shares his interests, the Professor overlooks the problems involved with leaving his two great responsibilities—his daughter and the museum—unguarded. During this period, Wilson completes his theft of the stones, noting them as “a challenge to my daring and my ingenuity” (266). To complete the theft he engineers a swap of twelve other stones, “made specially to my order, in which the originals were so carefully imitated that I defy the eye to detect the difference” (267). Once Wilson confesses, Andreas returns to the museum to substitute the real stones for the fakes in an effort to spare his daughter’s feelings. Although his substitution is not as skilful as Wilson’s extraction has been, the very act of replacing the stones is what causes Mortimer to bring the police inspector and the jewel expert in to consider the question of what is real and what is reproduced. In due course, Mortimer decides to take no further action after hearing the sad tale of the Andreas family. The object has been harmed, but not as much as the collector himself.

The story of “The Jew’s Breastplate” implies that one can be trained to be a more thoughtful viewer of the object by watching the collector in action. Jackson’s training, directed as it is by watching the way expert Professor Andreas handles

and appreciates objects, proves that one can become more reflective about the object when one starts to think about the collecting practices and what the object might signify to the collector. Looking through and past the object into the deep religious associations and history of the breastplate (including the current and very real threat against its safety), in particular, allows Jackson to more deeply question his own attitudes about just why the object matters.

Ultimately, Jackson's skepticism and inattention pay off. What is most important in "The Jew's Breastplate" is the protection and preservation of the family. Here, the collector must make a difficult choice: outright sacrifice his daughter and her fiancée or attempt to cover up the harm that has been done to his beloved objects. In making this choice, Professor Andreas discovers, to his horror and his shame, that he has too long been distracted by objects. He cannot see the harm being done within his own family circle. Only by sacrificing his obsessions and reorienting his attention from objects to people can he succeed in restoring domestic tranquility. The intercession of his daughter Elise spurs both Wilson and Andreas to admit not only the damage that they have done to the object but the damage that the object has done to them as well. If "The Six Napoleons" highlighted what the object can signify about attitudes towards race and immigration, "The Jew's Breastplate" stands out as a treatment of how the object can distract one from the problems of the family at home.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE COLLECTION AND THE COLLECTOR:

"THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE GARRIDEBS"

Conan Doyle returns to the idea of the expert collector and his engagement with objects in the Sherlock Holmes adventure "The Adventure of the Three

Garridebs.” Written a quarter century after “The Jew’s Breastplate” for the American magazine *Collier’s*, this 1924 short story revolves around an attempt to trick private collector Nathan Garrideb out of his lodgings so that a counterfeit currency printing kit can be retrieved from a hiding place in his quarters. Using the alluring promise of an American inheritance, the criminal “Killer” Evans appeals to the worst aspect of the good-natured Garrideb’s character, namely his greedy desire to expand his collection. Watson’s observations of Garrideb as a collector highlight his interiority and his own esoteric knowledge that is frequently underscored by his close partnership with Holmes. Like Jackson in “The Jew’s Breastplate,” Watson watches the collector with rapt attention as he tactilely engages his collection of objects.

Throughout the mystery of “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs,” Doctor Watson is more sympathetic to the collector, his work, and his desire to expand his collection than either the villainous Killer Evans or Sherlock Holmes himself, who in referring to Nathan Garrideb as a “good old fossil” (621) directly links the collector to the objects he collects, erasing any other facets of his identity. For Watson, “The Three Garridebs” is an interesting adventure because it has flexible interpretations: “[i]t may have been a comedy, or [. . .] a tragedy. It *cost* one man his *reason*, it *cost* me a blood-letting, and it *cost* yet another man the penalties of the law[. . .]. Well, you shall *judge* for yourselves” (610, emphasis mine). This passage is intriguing for a number of reasons. First, it draws attention to the fact that the act of collection involves cost, both monetary and physical. More importantly, the passage’s focus on reason and judgment emphasizes that reason and the exercise thereof are crucial components of both collecting and

appreciating collections. Without the ability to reason or judge, there is no clear-cut way to partake of the “meaning” (Benjamin “Unpacking” 67) associated with the collection⁸⁴. The idea of reason, closely linked as it is to the idea of a well-developed interiority, is inextricably bound up in this story about the objects in the private collection and their collector’s enthusiasm over the items under his temporary control.

Thus far, the biggest danger to confront both the collector and the viewer of the collection is one of organization. The collector Mr. Nathan Garrideb is a mild eccentric who hardly ever leaves his rooms, except to visit auction houses in the hopes of expanding his personal collection. Upon entering Garrideb’s rooms, Watson is astonished by the scope of Garrideb’s collection, described here

as [one that is as] *curious* as its occupant. It *looked like a small museum*. It was both broad and deep, with cupboards and cabinets all round, *crowded* with specimens, geological and anatomical. Cases of butterflies and moths⁸⁵ flanked each side of the entrance. [. . .] As I glanced round I

⁸⁴ For Walter Benjamin, writing in “Unpacking My Library,” the enjoyment of the object stems partially from tactile experience. The private collector must physically hold the object (or even hold the object with a fixed gaze) in order to fully experience the “images [and] memories” (67) that Benjamin suggests the object can trigger. (Obviously, the object is not the container of “images, memories” but the collector/holder/viewer is.) This tactile relationship of the object and the owner/collector is one that allows the collector to enter an almost trancelike state. In describing the holding of an object, Benjamin states that the collector “seems to be seeing through them into their distant past as though inspired” (61), an idea he revisits in his writings on the role of the collector in *The Arcades Project*. Here, the private collector has the privilege of “seeing through them” (the object) or being “inspired” in ways that the public viewer at a museum does not typically enjoy. The private collector is and must be a tactile collector, one who thoroughly engages with the objects under his control and protection.

⁸⁵ The collection of butterflies and moths was a very popular Victorian pastime. Perhaps the best literary description of a lepidopterist occurs in Chapter 20 of Joseph Conrad’s *Lord Jim*. Conan Doyle and Buchan were both personally acquainted with Conrad and, in their correspondence with family and friends, frequently indicate him as one of their favorite authors.

*was surprised at the universality of the man's interests. Here was a case of ancient coins. There was a cabinet of flint instruments. [. . .] It was clear that he was a student of many subjects. As he stood in front of us now, he held a piece of chamois leather in his right hand with which he was polishing a coin*⁸⁶. (616, emphasis mine)

Watson, taken aback by the fact that the client's "curious" room "look[s] like a small museum," is stunned and "surprised at the universality of the man's interests." Here, Watson's shocked response to his quick "glanc[e] round" is reminiscent of Baudrillard's insistent questions regarding the organization of everyday objects. "How can we," asks Baudrillard, "hope to classify a world of objects that changes before our eyes and arrive at an adequate system of description? There are almost as many criteria of classification as there are objects themselves" (3). Watson, viewing multiple display cases, is temporarily caught in "a world of objects that changes before [his] eyes," made more overwhelming because of the "many criteria of classification" that he should be aware of to be properly appreciative. The private collection of Garrideb, jumbled together here in Watson's description, echoes the jumbling of the Belmont Street Museum's collection of papyri, mummies, jewels, and scarabs. For Watson, like Jackson before him, the very proximity and proliferation of objects, crowded together as they are, acts to temporarily deluge the senses and overwhelm the reasoning capacity. Focusing on the collector proves more restful than struggling with trying to sort through so many objects and all that they might signify. Like the objects at the Belmore Street Museum, the objects Mr. Garrideb works with overwhelm and distract from interactions with the people who are also present in these scenes.

⁸⁶ The treasures of Garrideb described here also echo Mr. Fairlie's collected jumble in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*.

Yet in the midst of this chaos, there is order. The appearance of the collector himself, “polishing a coin,” reassures Watson. There is, in fact, the possibility that “classification” can occur, even in “a world” of such divergent objects. The “[c]ases” and “cabinet[s]” ease the spectator as they reveal a type of order, established and best described by the collector himself. Gazing about, Watson acknowledges the collector as “a student of many subjects,” an opinion reinforced by seeing Garrideb at work with his collection, “polishing a coin.” Watson’s surprise allows him to appreciate the words of the collector, as well as his work, even more as Garrideb tells his story within his own small museum. Garrideb’s collection reflects an obsessive passion for the object. With Garrideb’s presence, the collection is made meaningful and functionary, particularly as he polishes the coin or discusses his collection with Holmes. If working with the object led to Professor Andreas feeling protectively possessive over objects no longer under his direct control, so too with Garrideb.

When discussing his potential good luck at receiving an American inheritance (which proves to be part of the scam designed to remove him from his quarters) with Holmes and Watson, Garrideb discloses his dreams to continue developing his collection. He desperately longs for the ability to purchase “a dozen specimens in the market at the present moment which fill gaps in my collection, and which I am unable to purchase for want of a few hundred pounds. Just think what I could do with five million dollars. Why, *I have the nucleus of a national collection*. I shall be the Hans Sloane⁸⁷ of my age” (617). In discussing collection

⁸⁷ Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753) was a noted collector, physician and botanist. In his will, he left directions that his collection, together with the collections of

practices, Benjamin refers to the “thrill of acquisition” and this “thrill” is certainly what motivates Garrideb, who eventually allows himself to fall victim to his own greed⁸⁸. Garrideb’s dream of using his collection as a nucleus of a still greater collection suggests a desire to be remembered by others. This is important because, cut off as he is from both family and from other people, Garrideb runs the risk of not being remembered at all. Sadly, Garrideb’s interactions with objects come at the expense of his interactions with other members of a larger community and eventually negatively impact both his health and his reason.

numerous other enthusiasts that he had purchased over the years and added to his own, were to be offered to the nation at a sum far below their value. Parliament accepted the offer and the Sloane Collection thus formed the nucleus of the collections of the British Museum (MacGregor). Constricted as he is by his limited income and the small physical space of his quarters, Garrideb’s reference to Sloane stands out as a pipe dream.

⁸⁸ There is still value to be had in the act of collecting. In his 1931 essay “Unpacking My Library,” Walter Benjamin reviews the many merits that owning a private collection offers. For Benjamin, these include “a mood of anticipation” (59), a “passion [that] borders on the chaos of memories” (60), and a “disorder” (60) that through “habit” (60) is transformed into “order” (60). Benjamin, while “giving . . . some insight into the relationship of a . . . collector to his possessions” (60), observes that the primary advantage of the private collection “for a collector” (67) is his ability to engage in “ownership” (67), which is defined by Benjamin as “the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him, it is he who lives in them” (67). Building upon this notion, the possession of the object allows for the collector to not only recall their own “chaos of memories” (60) but to also recall the history of past owners and the process of manufacture, for instance. In the act of recall, the collector “lives in” the object, using the “relationship that one can have to objects” as a temporary safety net, one that saves him/her from falling into the “chaos” or “disorder” of the past. Thus, the act of recall is no longer one that could be potentially mentally harmful, instead, for Benjamin, the collector’s recall is one of “anticipation” (59) and “passion” (60), both suggesting a sense of happiness. Benjamin, speaking from and with a collector’s experience, proposes that the private collection leads to a private joy (59). While this framework can be used to understand the personal collection of Garrideb, I suggest that it applies just as equally to the way that Professor Andreas views and interacts with the Belmore Street Museum’s objects.

At this moment, I find that it would be useful to briefly return to the idea of reason and its potential connection to organization. Holmes recognizes the work of the collector as his “studies” (617) and engages in small talk with Garrideb, praising the collection as both a gathering of “odd knowledge” and a “storehouse,” suggesting that it would be useful for him (Holmes) to examine it (620). Garrideb, flattered, acknowledges Holmes as “an intelligent man,” and quickly grants permission when Holmes asks to view the collection when Garrideb is not present. Holmes notes that “these specimens are so well labeled and classified that they hardly need your personal explanation” (620). Garrideb’s system, not obvious to the methodical Dr. Watson, eliminates the need for the collector to act as interpreter. The “well labeled and classified” “specimens” seemingly only require a viewer capable of reason. Holmes’ comment suggests that Garrideb’s collection—and his classification system—allows an intelligent person to enjoy not only the display of collectible objects, but also to enjoy their own interpretations free from the mediation of the (in this case overly enthused) collector. However, without the collector’s presence, the collection loses its meaning (Benjamin), an idea reinforced in the fact that when Holmes and Watson return to Garrideb’s rooms, they ignore the collection entirely. (Granted, they are attempting to capture a notorious criminal.) Holmes, normally overly observant, takes no time to meditate upon any specific object in the collection. The absence of Garrideb renders the meaning of the collection lost, even with his remarkable labels.

The collector’s objects and the counterfeit printing press kit concealed beneath the floorboards of Garrideb’s home both distract attention away from more

complicated issues involving threats to both physical and financial safety⁸⁹. Once again, the fact that people have actually come to physical harm is neatly obscured by the quality and quantity of objects on display and the fact that one must slow down to deal with the sheer surfeit of them. The overstimulated, overburdened imagination is incapable of more fully dealing with the far more significant problems of people by the end of this story.

In a casual aside at the end of “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs,” Nathan Garrideb is revealed to be in a nursing home (626), due to the “loss” of his “reason” (610). No mention is made of the status of his collection, which might as well not exist. Here, the tragic tale of the private collector indicates someone distracted by objects, too willing to sacrifice family, friends, fortune, or even health for the sake of a few gewgaws. Yet the work the collector performs in educating himself/herself regarding the collection, the delight in caring for an object, and the fact that a collection of suitable objects can lead to productive and stimulating leisure practices that could all potentially produce a better human being. The problem here is that the collector must interact with others in order to take advantage of this stimulation. Cut off as he is, Garrideb lives a fantasy that ultimately crashes down around him. Finally separated from his objects, he is also completely severed from his reason. While Garrideb’s end is certainly tragic, the joy that he took from the act of collecting is what makes him a remarkably memorable character, more worthy of Watson’s intense gaze than any of the

⁸⁹ By the end of the story, Garrideb is in a nursing home and Watson is recovering from yet another gunshot wound. The financial security of the United Kingdom is secure, however, thanks to the quick actions of Holmes.

objects he owned. The cautionary tale of Nathan Garrideb can be read as one requiring more intense scrutiny than any of the small objects in his collection which otherwise distract attention away from him.

In both “The Jew’s Breastplate” and “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs” the chance to interact with the object emerges as a way to stimulate not only conversation but also the intellect and the imagination. Although museums have long had careful guidelines for the handling of their most important treasures behind the scenes, on the visitor’s side of the line the idea of handling has been generally discouraged. While cautious practices involving the removal of jewelry, the wearing of gloves and masks, and the use of proper padding and support continue on in today’s museum—indeed, many museums currently have operating guidelines that are direct descendants of those published in the late Victorian age—a more recent trend in museum studies has emerged as a result of studies in psychoneurology that document the scientific importance of touch. This trend seems to be a return to a happier day and age where museumgoers *could* engage with the object and frequently did so (Classen 137) before curators became more sensitive to the risks of graffiti, pigment damage, and theft, amongst others. Yet even in the desire to control and to protect the object, museum curators still desired to educate the museum going audience. For instance, Edward A. Bond’s overview of the development and rapid expansion of the British Museum’s holdings in the 1884 *Guide to the Exhibition Galleries of the British Museum* concludes on a plaintive note, longing for students to take advantage of lessons that “could be given from the visible objects and specimens exhibited in the Museum” (xix). Bond’s observation that “it cannot be doubted that a more living interest in the arts

[. . .] would be awakened than can be excited by the more usual modes of teaching from the book” prefigures the shift to more friendly, more modern museums that encourage touch⁹⁰. More and more, these museums are turning to a direct engagement for both the viewing public and the object as curators recognize that handling objects can lead to a fruitful and productive learning experience about the self and the world alike. Touching the object lets us think about it more rigorously than just merely seeing it can⁹¹. Yet even with lessons from collectors, enthusiasts, and archivists, all accompanied by the chance to outright handle objects, it’s still entirely possible to misread what the object is if our imagination runs too free. In sum, the collections found in both the public and the private museum permit the possibility of a mental adventure which, like the physical adventure, can be risky.

THE ADVENTURE OF MISREADING THE OBJECT:

“THAT LITTLE SQUARE BOX”

The final story that I treat in this chapter, “That Little Square Box,” is actually the first chronologically in this selection of stories⁹². Once again, this

⁹⁰ A rigorous discussion regarding the foundation of a British Museum Association can be traced back to 1877. The organization finally held a first meeting in 1890 in Liverpool after years of correspondence and negotiations. A valuable resource on the topic of all things relating to museum curation and the enhancement of visitor’s experiences is the first report of the Association’s *Proceedings*, published in 1890. Noted articles include E. Howarth’s talk on “Museum Cases and Museum Visitors” and Henry Higgins’ Presidential Address, which includes a discussion of the private collection of John Ruskin. Other museums, including ones located in Berlin, Dublin, and Washington as well as the Smithsonian under general secretary Professor Goode followed the Association’s activities with great interest.

⁹¹For a discussion regarding modern day museum practices, see Chatterjee, Pye, and Shelley.

⁹² Conan Doyle first published “That Little Square Box” in *London Society*, a monthly periodical that ran from 1862 until 1898, in December 1881’s Christmas

short story reflects some of the many anxieties relating to economic and social concerns that dominated then-current discourse, especially regarding immigrants and radical politics. “That Little Square Box” is a story that attempts to blend genres, and clearly shows the influence of Conan Doyle’s readings in travel narratives, short stories, and thrillers. Part thriller, part comedy, part moral lesson, the story recounts an episode in the life of Hammond, a reclusive invalid traveling aboard ship for reasons of health from Boston to England. Hammond is quick to judge and eager to confide. He manages to get himself unexpectedly caught up in exciting happenings, completely by chance. The adventures of Hammond during “That Little Square Box” end up spoofing the dangers of reading too much into mysterious objects at the cost of further isolation from a greater community.

Hammond—a self-confessed nervous, melancholic, and sedentary traveler—eavesdrops on the private conversation of two of his fellow passengers, Muller and Flannigan. Reading too much into their names and spying a large and mysterious box that is the focus of their conversation, he works himself into a state of anxiety regarding a possible anarchist plot to blow up the ship. He confesses his fears to yet another fellow passenger, his former schoolmate, Dick Merton. Dick, refuses to believe and tries to dissuade Hammond from taking action against the two men. Dick and Hammond continue their conversations at dinner with the ship’s captain, where a discussion about Fenianism takes place that only serves to make Hammond more anxious. Disregarding Dick’s advice, Hammond imagines and theorizes about the box before following Muller and Flannigan. He finally both

volume. The story is generally excluded from anthologies of Conan Doyle’s juvenilia and no criticism exists.

physically and verbally confronts both men, despite his nervous assertions that he will be destroyed by their plot. The two men are not sinister at all. Instead, they are pigeon fanciers who have brought special racers onboard that they intend to use to test a new route. The story ends with a chagrined Hammond too distressed at his misinterpretation to even conclude the story in his own words, using a newspaper story to finish his narrative instead.

In “That Little Square Box” Conan Doyle shifts the traditional role of adventurous protagonist from the physically fit and appealing Dick Merton, all too ready to assume the best of his fellow passengers and the objects that they carry, to the more suspicious and feeble Hammond. Hammond’s crankiness and potential unreliability showcase not only his worst assumptions about his fellow man, but also his own racist attitudes. Dick’s good health and humor may color the way that he sees the world (both objects and people), but Hammond’s peevishness, anxieties, and suspicions do so as well. He has concerns about class difference, race, and an uneasiness with existing social structures, and prefers developing his own flawed ideas upon these topics in solitude over interactions with other people. He may be observant, like Holmes, but quite unlike Holmes, he is hasty and verging on ridiculous as he tells his revealing suspicions, that all prove quite groundless once the titular object is more carefully examined.

Hammond’s own assessment of his character is crucial to his understanding of the objects and the people that surround him aboard ship. Hammond is, in his own words, “a very nervous man” who leads a “sedentary literary life,” “loves solitude,” and apparently has no desire to return “back to the land of my forefathers” (123). In this paragraph, mixed in as it is with an observation of the

noises that surround him, Hammond suggests that he has a “sensitive nature” and that he feels “upon the verge of a great though indefinable danger” (123), regardless of his intense interest in “supernatural phenomena” (124). Hammond’s nerves, solitude, and general sensitivity all suggest a character that should be highly intelligent and observant, properly appreciative of objects that are out of place, trying to command and disrupt attention. When he does finally notice “[a] pile of portmanteaus and luggage [. . .] awaiting their turn to be taken below” (125) he enters into a meditative state, relishing his “solitude” and the chance for “a melancholy reverie” (125). So far, at least, Hammond seems to have several of the more desirable qualities of the properly attuned adventurous traveler embarking on a journey of interiority: observational prowess, a willingness and ability to carve out a space for solitude, and an interest in his surroundings. He has not yet fully come into contact with the disruptive powers of the object.

When he least expects it, Hammond is thrust into his adventurous encounter with the object. He is “aroused” (125) by a conversation between two suspicious characters named Muller and Flannigan and immediately assumes the worst. Their conversation is certainly one that hints at danger, their physical appearances suggest that they are up to no good, and, as Hammond himself acknowledges, even their names offer powerful connotations of a sinister plot: “The very name of “Flannigan” smacked of Fenianism, while “Muller” suggested nothing but socialism and murder” (129). Assuming the worst of his fellow man and falling back on very real racist notions regarding the Irish and the Germans, as well as the revolutionary politics that continued to affect both groups and led to large-scale emigration, particularly in the last half of the nineteenth century,

Hammond continues speculating on his “chain of circumstantial evidence” (129) before finally deciding that there is no chance for “any conclusion other than that they were the desperate emissaries of some body, political or otherwise, who intended to sacrifice themselves, their fellow-passengers, and the ship, in one great holocaust” (129). Even in the wake of this interpretation, Hammond hesitates to act, other than through the experience of a “cold shudder” (129). As he reminds us several times throughout the telling of his tale, he is “a physical coward” (129) and “a moral one also” (129). Facing the risk of “desperate emissaries” willing to “sacrifice” “the ship, in one great holocaust,” Hammond’s unwillingness to act and his willingness to self-identify as a coward stand out as interesting twists to the adventure genre. While other adventure protagonists do frequently self-identify as cowards⁹³, they typically quickly redeem themselves through physical or mental action, typically saving someone else from extreme peril⁹⁴.

While Muller⁹⁵ and Flannigan are certainly suspicious in their physical appearances and actions, their “dark object” (126) is what truly raises Hammond’s concerns. Hammond observes

⁹³ John Buchan’s Richard Hannay also regularly announces his cowardice but in actuality he is quite brave. He simply prefers to slow down and consider his chances for success before making decisions when feasible. If others are at risk, Hannay always acts. Hammond, on the other hand, is physically and morally weak, which in turn makes him hesitant to take any type of action whatsoever, even when the lives of others are potentially threatened.

⁹⁴ This particular trope can be traced back to *The Odyssey*. It resurfaces regularly in the genre and continues throughout nineteenth century adventure fiction as well.

⁹⁵ Muller’s Germanic name also marks him as a suspicious and possibly anarchistic character. The German states and the vast holdings of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, continually seething with the potential for revolutions from 1846-1914, were viewed somewhat suspiciously by members of the middle class with more

a little square box made of some dark wood, and ribbed with brass. I suppose it was about the size of a cubic foot. It reminded me of a pistol-case, only it was decidedly higher. There was an appendage to it, however, on which my eyes were riveted, and which suggested the pistol itself rather than its receptacle. This was a trigger-like arrangement upon the lid, to which a coil of string was attached. Beside this trigger there was a small square aperture through the wood. [. . .] A curious clicking noise followed from the inside of the box". (126-127).

What could this object possibly be? The description is so vague that focusing on phrases that *are* known provides answers that simultaneously heighten both suspense and fright. Phrases such as "pistol-case," "trigger-like arrangement," "coil of string," and "curious clicking noise" succeed in raising concerns that a plot might be afoot. The object is mysterious, known but unknown, vague, suggestive of a multiplicity of ideas, seemingly unsafe at best. Caught up in terror as he is, Hammond's interpretation of the object remains muddled. Reason has fled and he is unable to process the object based on the limited information that he has seen, that he can recall. His solitude here proves ineffective as an aid for interpretation and compromises his ability to understand or to think reasonably about the object. At the moment, Hammond cannot think at all about the object, in either a right way or a wrong way.

But Hammond persists in his belief, rejecting a possible modern explanation of the object ("a photographic camera" (132)) for his preferred interpretation, also modern, of "an infernal machine" (132)). The imaginative possibilities of the machine that he has fashioned in his own mind are, in his heightened state of anxiety, more fulfilling than other plausible explanations.

conservative political leanings despite the Germanic heritage of both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. For more on the complex relationship that existed between Germany and England during the latter half of the nineteenth century, see John R. Davis.

Hammond's repeated insistence that the titular box is connected to a fiendish plot tells more about his own personal fears and point of worldview, allowing us by extension to see how the object can be misinterpreted when interiority is not properly attuned to the actualities of modern life. While the adventure can be a space of mental development, for Hammond, this particular episode only seems to be a setback. His ill health, peevishness, and insistence that he alone is right in his interpretation (only to be corrected by the inclusion of the concluding newspaper article) suggests that the adventure can trigger a state of mental distress when too many objects and not enough people are encountered. While the solitude of physical adventure may be prioritized, a connection to community needs to happen in order for the interior adventure to be as fulfilling as it possibly can be. Objects can connect us and can intrigue us, guiding us towards a point of discussion, but only if we can overcome the fears that may hold us back from taking these risks. Networking and community building, as well as acquiring and exchanging knowledge about the object, keeps the interiority from running amok.

Hammond's sense that an event of momentous doom will overtake the ship continues to escalate, especially after he sits at the captain's table at dinner with the men that he suspects. After a conversation with Flannigan and the Captain about the Fenian⁹⁶ cause (137-139), Hammond begins to respect an alternate position to the one that he himself had previously espoused but remains fixed in his belief that

⁹⁶ Loosely, the Fenian movement straddled both sides of the Atlantic and functioned as a call to the end of British domination of Ireland. While the movement was at its most prominent (and violent) in the 1860s and 1870s, it continued on through the Home Rule debates and eventually was absorbed by other organizations dedicated to Irish Republicanism in the 1920s. For more on Fenianism, see Jenkins and Kelly.

Flannigan and Muller together will compromise the ship's safety. In this moment, Hammond is not only incapable of interpreting and understanding objects, he is also incapable of understanding and participating in the greater shipboard community through the act of basic conversation. Following dinner, he continues to theorize that he is the only person who can physically stop Muller and Flannigan. He springs into action just as Flannigan again pours something into the box (143). Hammond's "nervous system seemed to give way in a moment" (143), he screams, and "spring[s]" to his feet," and notes that he "had gone too far to retreat" (143). Flannigan restrains him, Muller pulls the suspicious string, and the object's true identity emerges—it is a specially designed case for racing pigeons⁹⁷. What Hammond has seen as "the fatal box" (144) is very far from fatal in actuality, except, perhaps, for Flannigan's bird, still missing over the Atlantic as the story concludes (145)⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ The intense interest in the production, care, and development of racing pigeons is a popular topic in gazettes, sportsman's journals, and informational pamphlets in the Victorian period. Racing pigeons were—and still are— a regular part of agricultural exhibits at fairs. Pigeon fanciers on both sides of the Atlantic enthusiastically held race meets up until World War Two. Sadly, pigeon care is no longer as popular as it once was, perhaps due to their ubiquitous presence on the streets of so many major world cities, but recently, their possibilities as conveyors of information have come back into the news (Browning, Johnson, Singh). For more on Victorian era pigeon raising, see Woods.

⁹⁸ Hammond's fleeting encounter with what he interpreted as "the fatal box," if, read correctly, offers a chance for narrator and reader alike to use the box to speculate further about the problems and potentialities of political and economic unrest in the German states leading to an increased rate of emigration to England, as well as the Fenian interest in the then current Home Rule debate. While the average reader of *London Society* may have had a position on these issues, they were far more likely to be keenly interested in the treatment of sports including fly fishing, fox hunting, and pigeon races mentioned in the magazine's pages. The difficulties of political and economic unrest were not the specific purview of *London Society*, a highly "illustrated magazine of light and amusing literature for

For the middle class reader of “That Little Square Box,” Flannigan and Muller’s contraption should ideally function as a provocation towards a question. But the titular box, instead of “pos[ing] questions to us, questions about our needs and desires, questions above all of action” for Hammond (and by extension, the reader) only ends in frustration (Grosz 125). The ability to become so distracted by a gross misreading of the object and the people who own it ends in a remembered but failed adventure. Although Hammond’s misreading and faulty observations could potentially open up new lines of inquiry and thought, ultimately, “That Little Square Box” leaves both Hammond and the reader unfulfilled. Without proper training, a wide assortment of up-to-date knowledge, or a willingness to address one’s own fears, the adventure of misreading can be compared to attempting to steer a boat without a rudder. Even if misreading, having knowledge and a willingness to take risks can lead to a healthy interior adventure, rather than a flawed journey in the style of Hammond. Accepting correction and critique are valuable steps in the process of adventure; steps that Hammond refuses to take as he attempts to read objects and other people.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the main objective of my reading of this particular selection of stories is to query the shift of the evolving adventure genre towards interiority⁹⁹.

the hours of relaxation,” as per its title page. There were other publishers in Fleet Street willing to take on the political.

⁹⁹ This shift inwards in the adventure eventually fully blossoms in Conrad’s *Lord Jim* and Kipling’s *Kim* (1901), as well as the work of modernist writers marketed toward middlebrow audiences such as James Hilton (1933’s *Lost Horizon*), Rumer

Read as a whole, this slight selection of Conan Doyle's massive oeuvre may have initially struck readers and critics alike as lightweight entertainment, but I argue that these particular stories highlight the ways that the training and development of intellectual inquiry could take place through a direct engagement with collections and collectors as described in the adventure. Paul Zweig writes that the adventure must present "the subtleties of feeling which flesh out 'mere' acts" (96).

Interactions with the object enable this type of work, the development of "the subtleties of feeling" or interiority for the narrator in each of these stories. Reading metonymically and scrutinizing the literary representation of the object adds force to the idea that we as readers already know something about objects and what they signify, even if we may have temporarily forgotten or repressed the uglier aspects of that knowledge. In the case of Conan Doyle's works, then, the literary representation of objects is a powerful reminder to slow down and consider the past that has been and the future that might yet be possible. The object is a prompt, one that urges us to turn inwards in an adventurous quest to better ourselves. The collector answers this call, bettering himself through the act of rigorous intellectual inquiry. Through the dual acts of curating and maintaining the collected object, the collector continues to experience the pleasures of thought while fully immersed in systems of understanding and inquiry. Speaking to others about the object in oral or written form also allows the collector to assume an educative role as they help others to develop the personal interiority required for their own adventures.

Godden (1939's *Black Narcissus*), Graham Greene (1943's *The Ministry of Fear*) and Eric Ambler (1940's *Journey into Fear*).

Ultimately, it's the interaction with others that matters most, more so even than an engagement with objects.

Just as it is necessary to physically train the actual body through the act of exercise, so it is essential to cultivate good intellectual practices in order to avoid misreading either the bodies of the object or those around us. The figure of the collector can be a wonderfully encouraging guide on this journey towards enrichment. Yet it is important to note that collectors have their own goals, their own reasons for their actions. Sometimes, as in the case of the collectors Beppo and Professor Andreas, those goals establish them and their actions with the object as dangers to society. The danger of misreading objects and people alike can prove risky. However, with proper guidance, even a beginning stage observer of objects is capable of embarking on the great adventure of interiority. In the end, trading the outer physical world of the robinsonade for the cozy interiors of the study, museum, or ship's cabin forces a deeper engagement with the object, one that in turn also establishes a deeper engagement with interiority and with other people.

CHAPTER THREE

UNEASY AMONG “A WONDERFUL TREASURY OF BEAUTIFUL
THINGS”:

JOHN BUCHAN’S RICHARD HANNAY NOVELS

INTRODUCTION

In their works, Stevenson and Conan Doyle called attention to the problems associated with the growing obsession with a fast burgeoning materialist culture. Offering small glimpses of what objects signify at home, at sea, or in the museum, their visions depict the ways that objects can begin to distract and corrupt the self, the family, and even the community at large. The obsession with material culture becomes something that the adventurous hero of Stevenson and Conan Doyle’s works must strive against and overcome. We may think, as in Stevenson’s poem “Happy Thought,” that we are “as happy as kings” (2) when surrounded by a “world [that] is so full of a number of things” (1), but for these authors this turns out to be very far from accurate. This particular chapter considers the ways that yet another Scottish author, John Buchan, uses fiction to address and respond to the problem of becoming overly distracted by material possessions¹⁰⁰.

¹⁰⁰ Kate Macdonald and Nathan Waddell’s observation that “Buchan [. . .] was no simple adventure novelist or naïve imperialist, but one fundamentally attuned to the moral, political, religious, socio-cultural, philosophical, and racial ambiguities of his time” invites further speculation about his work from a variety of critical perspectives (1).

After many years, Buchan's varied and expansive literary career is just now beginning to be fully explored. Vernacular poetry, governmental propaganda and war reports, historical romances, biographies, religious treatises, and adventure are just some of the subgenre classifications that his work fits into¹⁰¹. Overall, his literary career amongst these many genres demonstrates a fascination with material culture, especially what it can tell us (or not tell us) about the people around us. For Buchan's adventure heroes, particularly Richard Hannay, material objects are nice if they provide comfort or if they can provide some helpful clues about society. But if they cannot be properly interpreted, or if they signify something undesirable, they become dangerous. Objects can corrupt and pollute the sanctity of home and the self. Ultimately, objects should be rejected unless they are associated with a national greater good or more valuable and congenial companions, friendship, family, or other positive, socially acceptable values.

John Buchan (1875-1940), born in Perth and raised in Fife, was trained as a classicist at Glasgow and Oxford and tried many professions including publishing,

¹⁰¹ As a publisher, historian, and politician who just happened to also be a popular and prolific writer, Buchan's career offers many fascinating opportunities for researchers to examine. Throughout his oeuvre, Buchan's work speaks to the changes and challenges faced by those raised in the Victorian period, changes that became only more intense as the Empire began its decline. Buchan's work has been surveyed in sources as far-ranging as Richard Osborne's *Clubland Heroes*, Janet Adam Smith's extensive biography (1965) and David Daniell's *The Interpreter's House* (1975). The late 1970s saw the establishment of the John Buchan Society (W. Buchan 249-253) with the support of the Buchan family. While the bulk of Buchan scholarship through the 1980s and 1990s was mostly constrained to the Society's *John Buchan Journal*, with the exceptions of William Buchan's biography *John Buchan: A Memoir* (1982) and Andrew Lownie's biography *John Buchan: The Presbyterian Cavalier* (1995), work on Buchan has been gradually creeping into other venues post-2000.

journalism, the civil service, and military intelligence¹⁰². In both his private and professional correspondence, Buchan consistently singles out Stevenson and Conan Doyle¹⁰³ as among his favorite authors^{104 105}. Although the Hannay novels were initially meant to be read as “shilling shockers” in the style of Stevenson¹⁰⁶, they also function as powerful pieces of propaganda, warning of the dangers of a domestic attack by foreign enemies via unsecured water and air spaces. Recent Buchan criticism has suggested that his work blurs what it means to be Scottish or English, “produc[ing] a force of twin, parallel loyalties” (Kate Macdonald, “Beyond” 3) that can be harvested for the sake of the Empire. Writing for

¹⁰² As Andrew Lownie rightly notes,

A Buchan biographer needs to have at least a nodding acquaintance with such varied topics as Scottish Church history, the nineteenth century Scottish education system, the Boer War and Reconstruction, propaganda during the First World War, the work of the publishing firm Nelson’s and the news agency Reuters, domestic policies in the inter-war period, and competing philosophies of empire and interwar Canadian politics. That is before one even begins to analyse [sic] over a hundred books that range from several different genres of novel, short stories and children’s stories to biographies, political studies, anthologies and a hand-book on the law of taxation. (Lownie 12)

¹⁰³ Conan Doyle was later Buchan’s colleague in the Ministry of Information, housed at Wellington House during WWI.

¹⁰⁴ In choosing John Buchan’s novels for further study in this project over authors more typically paired with Stevenson and Conan Doyle, such as Haggard, Kipling, or Conrad, I’m tracing the direct Scottish lineage of the revitalized adventure. Interestingly, the Hannay novels use a variety of ideas now associated with the Victorians and their values to deal with the problems of an even more mechanized, consumerism driven society.

¹⁰⁵ Like Stevenson and Conan Doyle, Buchan eventually settled more permanently in England.

¹⁰⁶ Buchan frequently uses this term in his personal correspondence to refer to the Hannay stories and, in his dedication to Tommy Nelson in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, uses this phrase (Harvie “Introduction”).

“middlebrow male readers,” Buchan drew on patterns of “late Victorian and Edwardian masculinity” to create a more mature adventure hero, one willing and able to tackle difficult situations (Kate Macdonald, “Beyond” 3). While some earlier Buchan scholars, including Janet Adam Smith, have lightly traced the connections between Stevenson’s adventures and Buchan’s work, little has been done so far to examine the way that Buchan embraced Stevenson’s call to arms advocating for specific descriptions of material culture in the adventure, as well as Conan Doyle’s construction and representation of interiority.

Drawing upon his own working knowledge of the formulas of the adventure genre, knowledge he gained and developed as both a voracious private reader and as an integral member of the Scottish publishing industry, I contend that Buchan’s work more openly raises and addresses the social, political, and historical ramifications of an ethical engagement with material culture than does the work of many of his predecessors. Buchan’s work, like that of Stevenson and Conan Doyle before him, navigates a society where sometimes objects are the only clues available to interpret just how to fit in. In the novels centered around the heroic figure Richard Hannay¹⁰⁷, objects and the people who use, admire, talk about, or ignore them all participate in a process that attempts to critique taste, judgment, and just what it means to be British. Objects—and what they signify—destabilize around Hannay, a recent London arrival from the colonies at the beginning of *The*

¹⁰⁷ These novels are *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), *Greenmantle* (1916), *Mr. Standfast* (1919), *The Three Hostages* (1924), *The Courts of the Morning* (1926), and *The Island of Sheep* (1936). For the purposes of this study, I shall be concentrating on *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *Greenmantle*, and *The Three Hostages* as they show Hannay at his most engaged while considering large collections of objects.

Thirty-Nine Steps but, by the end of his adventures in *The Island of Sheep*, a fully immersed member of British society. Whereas the ostentatious, bourgeois display of goods in the homes of working professionals that Hannay frequents celebrate and privilege wealth, learning more about people and society and how to achieve a vigorous role as a citizen in the metropole is more important in the Hannay cycle. Hannay rapidly learns the import of drawing upon his own rich interiority in order to promote and protect his own particular take on what objects signify about British civilization to him. Throughout, his resources and skills generally allow him to interpret and appreciate objects and people alike. Rejecting material objects in favor of a more active engagement with society matters is important for his colonial hero Hannay, who must learn how to appreciate and participate in a community that he does not fully understand. I read the Hannay cycle as a significant expansion and continuation of the Victorian adventure tradition. Hannay's skill set, including his sense of wonder and curiosity, keenly developed intellect, and his ability to network with others all combine to aid him in overcoming distracting and dangerous encounters with objects. This development of character through the process of adventure, through the evaluation of others and the objects in their possession, and in continuing to flex both mental and physical strength all works to reduce the potentially damaging effects of objects.

While Buchan scholarship has recently enjoyed a small uptick¹⁰⁸, it has not yet quite caught up with the burgeoning critical interests in material culture studies

¹⁰⁸ Douglas S. Mack's influential 2006 *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire*, published by Edinburgh University Press, extensively treats Buchan's novels, especially South African ties in *The Thirty-Nine Steps* and coded racism in *The Three Hostages*, all while extensively rehearsing Buchan's familial connections to

that have developed since Bill Brown's seminal 2001 *Critical Inquiry* essay on the topic of "Thing Theory" and its myriad possibilities¹⁰⁹. No study of Buchan's work has fully looked into the ways that he tried to deal with yet another contradiction so imbued and embedded in Scottish Calvinist culture as to be virtually undetectable: the problems of the comforts of home and the idea that one should never become so comfortable as to be complacent. I contend that Buchan's casually but carefully drawn interiors, rich with the small comforts so privileged and valued by the middle class, offer an interesting space to think about shifting ideals of use, value, ornamentation, decoration, and possession, as well as how these ideas can be further explored in the adventure or thriller genres. My work, while drawing upon recent developments in Buchan scholarship, proposes a union between the regularly studied Richard Hannay novels and the thriving, revitalized critical

the Free Kirk. Likewise, Colin Storer's 2009 *Journal of European Studies* article "The German of caricature, the real German, the fellow we were up against": German stereotypes in John Buchan's *Greenmantle*" reexamines stereotypes in Buchan's Hannay thrillers and notes that in addition to rather unusual portrayals of Muslims he also offers multiple different interpretations of the many Germans caught up in World War I. Nathan Waddell's valuable 2012 reassessment of Buchan's attitudes towards the trends of modernism in writing and culture offers an interesting reminder that Buchan was, at his core, very much a Victorian. Perhaps most fruitfully, Murray Pittock tantalizingly begins to trace connections between Buchan, Conan Doyle, and Stevenson in his 2009 "Scotland, Empire and Apocalypse-From Stevenson to Buchan" essay in the *Edinburgh Companion to Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* but ultimately fails to move beyond what he sees as what techniques Buchan learned from Stevenson (primarily pacing) and Buchan's interest in the fantastic and landscape shared with Conan Doyle. Like Pittock, Alan Riach sees connections between Buchan, Stevenson, and Conan Doyle. While he does pick up on the connection between exterior objects and interior monologue he too fails to fully deliver on the promise of his observation.

¹⁰⁹ Later reprinted as the opening essay in 2004's *Things*, edited by Brown.

interest in object studies¹¹⁰. In this chapter, I examine how Hannay deals with objects as his character evolves, particularly when he finds himself inside packed smoking rooms, dining rooms, libraries, closets, and studies. He does his best to adapt to the objects and the people that he encounters but he remains firmly ensconced in and enraptured by the comforts of a solidly Victorian material culture, despite his occasional outbursts against it.

Part of what makes the way that Hannay engages with material objects so interesting is that over the course of several novels we learn 1) what precisely it is that he values, 2) what objects signify to him about other people, 3) and what objects signify to him about the culture and class system that he is a part of. In one of his encounters with material culture, Hannay will typically use his senses to explore the object, figuring out what it is, how it works, if it can be used, and whether or not it is associated with comfort or with danger. For Hannay in moments of danger, the object-packed study, library, or cupboard is not a dense trove of clutter meant to be quickly glossed over. Instead these collections offer meaty possibilities for study and thought for both Hannay and the reader, providing

¹¹⁰ Two recent volumes of essays, 2009's *Reassessing John Buchan: Beyond The Thirty-Nine Steps* (ed. Kate Macdonald) and 2013's *John Buchan and The Idea of Modernity* (ed. Kate Macdonald and Nathan Waddell), have further developed emergent themes in Buchan scholarship. Authors in the 2013 collection are especially interested in the beginnings of Buchan's career as civil servant in South Africa and the closure of said career in Canada (Glassock, Galbraith), his interest in psychoanalysis and other scientific developments emerging from Germany (Miller), and his keen interest in Scotland's history, religion, and myth (Kerr, Shirey), as well as the development and treatment of male characters in his novels (Kestner). On the other hand, the essayists of the 2009 collected essays are interested in Buchan's close relationship with Calvinism (Greig), his complicated relationship with England (Goldie), the treatment of Islam and the East and businessmen in his fiction (al-Rawi, Taylor), and his usage of politics in suspense fiction (Riach), amongst other topics.

as they do not only insights into how to use and adapt the object, but more importantly, how to read in order to understand both self and others. The more adept Hannay becomes at reading objects, the more adept he becomes at reading people and unravelling secrets. At the beginning of his adventures in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, for instance, Hannay sees jumbles of objects, just as he has seen crowds of people, but by the end of the novel, he is able to sharpen his focus, to hone in, to see and articulate more clearly what he notices about the objects that surround him and the object lessons that they offer him about their owners. Simply put, objects matter in the Hannay cycle because 1) engagement with them allows Hannay to consider his own personal values, which I suggest bear strong traces of Calvinist influences; 2) they allow Hannay to consider them as signifying something about other characters and those characters' personal tasks and/or status; and 3) they afford Hannay an opportunity to interrogate his relationships to and with others.

John Buchan's Richard Hannay novels challenge the complacent attitudes of a British citizenry blissfully unaware of a rapidly shifting global political scene. The members of the middle class depicted in these novels are too obsessed with low cost manufactured goods and new leisure time activities to pay attention to the political ramifications that threaten national security. In Hannay's world, politics and political engagement is the playground of the elite¹¹¹. The comforts of home are too encompassing and too distracting for most people. For Hannay, being too comfortable at home amongst all of the cheap and readymade wonders, especially

¹¹¹ Hannay's own political knowledge (learned on the run in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *Greenmantle*, and *Mr. Standfast*) shows him as a complicated character unknowingly enmeshed in the very culture that he is attempting to critique.

those on display in the metropole of Empire, showcases a complacency that can be readily exploited by enemies. He may like and appreciate fast motorcars, bicycles, a clean collar, carpets, or bric-a-brac but he is generally not as seemingly attached to these objects in the same way that his enemies are. Indeed, Hannay is revolted by the clutter that he encounters in Trafalgar Lodge or by the artfully arranged sitting room of von Stumm. Yet just as he decries the tastes of von Stumm, Medina, or his other antagonists, it is important to observe that he yearns (especially during and after the war) to be surrounded by his own possessions, fully immersed in peace and quiet¹¹². While Hannay is observing and critiquing how others deal with objects, he is simultaneously learning what he values in objects and how to negotiate the anxieties that the objects manage to remind him of in their role as powerful signifiers. In his moves from bare, modern London apartment to cluttered county family home (Fosse Manor), he displays signs of learning how to navigate the complicated dynamics of material culture. Ultimately, by the time his adventures conclude, he has learned how to start becoming comfortable, not with other people's clutter, but with his own. The way Hannay

¹¹² Simon Glasscock's statement that

Buchan's heroes are not quite what they seem. Rather than being English public schoolboys they are mining engineers who have made their own fortunes in Rhodesia, Boer big-game hunters, American businessmen, Scottish aristocrats and Glaswegian grocers and street urchins. Far from being casually arrogant, Buchan's characters are as often engaged in introspection and self-doubt as they are in crossing a mountain pass in winter or leading a cavalry charge ("Civilizing" 34)

warrants further consideration. Glasscock also usefully observes that "Buchan's heroes are rather more complex than initial appearances suggest, so too are his popular novels, which marry action and adventure with ideas and reflection" (34).

manages himself and his possessions, I suggest, draws from the elements of Calvinistic materialism.

CALVINISTIC MATERIALISM AND THE BUCHAN ADVENTURE

All the way through the Hannay novels, the seductive qualities of the trappings of the rooms that he finds himself in operate as a reminder that immersion in material culture can limit both mental and physical growth. An outgrowth of Calvinism in nineteenth century Scotland, with its widespread immersion into all facets of everyday life including the mercantile and education worlds, was the expectation that its practitioners value and appreciate others, gain knowledge about both the physical and spiritual worlds, and to continually work on bettering one's own self. Simply put, gaining and spreading knowledge is and was far more important than gaining and spreading objects. Yet part of what complicates this idea in the context of the adventure is the idea of comfort. The notion that one can take a sort of physical ease can be difficult to negotiate, especially in a world filled with so many suffering individuals. Calvinism and its successor offshoots, Presbyterianism and the Church of Scotland, however, allow “the bourgeois business man, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable” to “follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so” (Weber 120). Buchan’s heroes prove to be model exemplars of the negotiation of this tricky Calvinistic materialism that simultaneously allows and shuns the idea of possessions. This peculiar but practical way of dealing with wealth permits Buchan to create a character who has no need for improving his wealth. With his money already

made, Hannay is free to forge his own way and to focus on his calling, which according to Anthony Giddens, “refers basically to the idea that the highest form of moral obligation of the individual is to fulfil his duty in worldly affairs” (Giddens xii). Hannay, like his antagonists the archaeologist, the spies, and Medina, all actively pursue adventurous tasks that they feel relate to “worldly affairs.” However, the Germans and Medina all succumb to the pleasurable comforts of material objects, falling into the trap of “idle luxury or self-indulgence” (Giddens xiii). Hannay’s continual sufferings in the harsh landscapes of Scotland, France, or Turkey all render him immune from the disease of materialism. His aching desperation to be part of a mission, to avoid the boredom of London or the tranquility of country life, all show him as rejecting the hold of material goods. When he eventually settles down at Fosse Manor with his beloved Mary, he is still far more interested in participating actively in a community, even if it is a small, family centered community. Learning where one fits into the world and how to better the world are what is most important, what make up one’s calling. One’s own small creature comforts are permissible, but to fully immerse one’s self in possessions and to lose track of others is not.

Buchan’s Hannay novels end up drawing on the deeply embedded traditions of Calvinism to create work that furthers the shift Stevenson began from the capitalistic acquisition adventure (Weber 22) or physical survival narrative to a new style of adventure, one that is instead more spiritual and intellectual, an embarkation down a path towards an individual happiness. Trying to negotiate the calling of adventure and where one belongs in the world marks a return to “the joy of living” (Weber 8) for the Scottish writers of adventure that allows them to

experiment with issues of trust and “the private confession” (Weber 62) that Calvinism otherwise rejects. The sense of self-awareness, personal responsibility, and self-confidence of Calvinism all overtly color Richard Hannay and directly impact whatever “spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment” (Weber 75) he may have during his adventures. Yet when he is static, Hannay misses his quests. For him, adventure is a corrective, a reinsertion of the “spontaneous vitality of impulsive action” (Weber 79) that Calvinism had so vigorously held in check for so long for so many Scots. The return to spontaneous vitality is important because it allows Hannay to test his physical and mental acumen, to challenge himself, and to refresh his senses. Calvinism allows for “one’s own ability and initiative” (Weber 122) to be important to success. If his enemies enjoy the “impulsive enjoyment” of objects, Hannay himself needs “impulsive action” to remind himself of his connection to the community and the wonders of his own abilities. There is too much distracting power in objects. Without the reminder of action, he is in danger of being overwhelmed by the troubling abundance of objects that he comes into contact with.

In a post-Calvin Scotland, it became perfectly acceptable, proper, and expected to succeed as an individual at one’s own calling. It was fully expected by the nineteenth century that the only way to fully participate in and to save the greater community from threats was to learn to operate as a productive individual within that same community. Steeped in both Calvinist tradition and Victorian

values (William Buchan 253), the works of Stevenson, Doyle, and Buchan¹¹³ all examine the process of becoming part of a greater community. Buchan, in his investigations, uses a fully grown adult male protagonist, one already set in many of his attitudes and who has chosen to retire early from his profession. Part of why Hannay is so desperately bored at the beginning of his adventures is because while he has achieved success as an individual, he does not yet fit into a greater community. He lacks the material goods that signal to others that he is a worldly success and longs to someday have a place where he can carve out space for himself and for his own objects. At his inner core, however, lurks “[a] gnawing

¹¹³ Thinking more about the connections between his father’s work and Stevenson’s, William Buchan notes in his biography that he feels that

Unlike Stevenson, he [John Buchan] had found the Calvinism of his upbringing a gentle and a joyful thing. [. . .] Each had a very different manner of dealing with his moral and religious inheritance. John Buchan accepted his, modified it with Platonism, and let it [. . .] guide him all his days. [. . .] There is no doubt that, for John Buchan, Calvinism, with whatever constraints it put upon him, was a source of strength. ‘Calvinism,’ he wrote,

is a strong creed--capable of grievous distortion sometimes, too apt, perhaps, to run wild in dark and vehement emotions, or in the other extreme to dwarf to a harsh formality; but those of us who have been brought up under its shadow know that to happier souls it can be in very truth a tree of life, with leaves for the healing of nations.

(William Buchan 254)

Just as Stevenson had before him, Buchan used many of the qualities and facets of his religious upbringing in his storytelling. Buchan’s work emphasizes the salvation of the country and the community over the salvation and/or reforming of the individual, a topic that somewhat deviates from the expected norms of adventure. The heroes of both novelists use the tensions, anxieties, and constrictions associated with interactions with the object to both develop and test reserves of inner strength.

sense of the worthlessness of worldly success” (James Buchan, par. 9) that forces him to turn ever inward, all while simultaneously trying to figure out just how he can fit into the greater imperial project. The outward markers of worldly success as evidenced in the detritus of the various rooms that he visits all serve as reminders that he must continue the struggle to fully understand not only others, but also his own purpose. The objects others own serve to remind Hannay that success or ruin are equal possibilities and that only a man’s own instincts and industry (and the occasional bit of downright luck) are what can save him from a complete undoing. Objects may serve as a marker of individual materialistic success, but on a smaller scale, it’s much harder to recognize their worth if the history associated with the object and its provenance is unknown. The object matters to the individual and can, at certain points, matter far too much to the individual, but may not matter to the other members of the extended external community. Objects matter, but this mattering can only be fully formed when the material value of the object comes into contact with “the manly character” of the individual, which John Ruskin recognizes as a problematic relationship, one that while it forms wealth, is ultimately mutually destructive (Ruskin 76-77). If Buchan has anxieties resurfacing throughout the Hannay novels, they are 1) that a sense of complacency may prohibit the community from recognizing threats and dangers and fighting back against them appropriately; that 2) the individual may become more important than the whole of the community; and 3) that the pursuit of objects for individual glory, rather than a greater good, can corrupt. Continuing to better the self through the process of adventure allows a needed “elevat[ion]” “above the material world” (Gaudio 80).

The Calvinism practiced by the Buchan family, like that of so many other Scottish families post-Enlightenment, was one that promoted a strong and involved role in government, scholarly, and professional affairs. Rather than secluding one's self from the world, as suggested by the monasticism of many Catholic theologians, the Calvinistic religions instead encouraged confident believers to fully and actively participate in society. Material success and professional achievements could be gained and were prized as signs that one was part of the elect. If it was alright to be comfortable in one's profession and one's own home, it was still considered appropriate and expected that one would take an active interest in charitable endeavors aimed at saving the less fortunate. One could not simply expect success; one had to work for it and to continue to work to maintain it. Although Buchan, like Stevenson, never overtly has his primary heroes declaim their religious views, the sufferings of David Balfour in Stevenson's *Kidnapped* and Jim Hawkins in *Treasure Island*, like the manifold sufferings of Richard Hannay when immersed in political conflict and war, are not just meant to display their plucky intelligence and stout-heartedness but are also meant to reveal their status as members of the elect, fully deserving of rich rewards on earth (and presumably in heaven as well¹¹⁴). The continued emphasis on self-doubt, self-

¹¹⁴ Writing in "The Roots That Clutch: John Buchan, Scottish Fiction and Scotland," Douglas Gifford posits that "Buchan was fundamentally and damagingly stretched between opposing identities, inherited and desired. I think that he and Stevenson, both with strong Presbyterian backgrounds, both struggling to find their own way, share the dichotomy between providence and chance" (Gifford 30).

confidence, and interiority that Buchan develops in the Hannay cycle all stems from this Calvinist heritage¹¹⁵.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE OBJECT: *THE THIRTY-NINE STEPS*

John Buchan first introduced the character of Richard Hannay in 1915's *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Newly arrived in London after a mining and engineering career that has taken him through South Africa and Rhodesia, Hannay has retired at the age of 37. He is comfortably well-off and spends his time touring sights, taking in various entertainments, and musing upon his lack of significant friendships. He ends up unexpectedly caught up in a mystery involving a spy syndicate when Scudder, a free lance agent, hides out in Hannay's home. Scudder is killed and Hannay ends up fleeing north¹¹⁶ from both the police and the murderers. During his journeys, he tries to interpret the clues Scudder left behind, first in order to prove his own innocence and then in order to foil the greater

¹¹⁵ In his biography of his father, William Buchan proclaims that

[t]here is something haunted about JB's imaginative writing. His accute appreciation of evil and its perpetual presence--his intense perception of it, not only in people and politics, but in landscape also and even buildings--and the need to combat it by all means form a salient feature of all his writings. [. . .] Obviously a Calvinist upbringing could easily set a romantic mind in such a mould and thus, for a writer, provide an inexhaustible theme to be worked over, turned about, examined from a hundred different points of view, without ever diminishing its immediacy. (W. Buchan 255)

Here, William Buchan seems to be picking up on the powerful connections between the romance (what his father, Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and their contemporary Andrew Lang, among others, all called the adventure subgenre), Calvinism, and the intense powers of interiority and the imagination. Alas, he fails to develop the idea more thoroughly.

¹¹⁶ The decision to flee north is made because Hannay is by birth Scottish. Unfamiliar with the United Kingdom as a whole, he decides to take a chance on the country of his heritage.

overall plot of the spies. Throughout, he struggles to negotiate his own feelings, his responses to other people, and the various anxieties that are heightened when he deals with objects that are so familiar that they risk being ignored completely even as the obscure a clearer view of the people that they are associated with. Hannay learns to trust his own responses and to think more carefully about what objects can (and cannot) tell him about their owners. Objects and the lessons that they offer end up reminding Hannay of skills that he already possesses but may not consciously be aware of.

Hannay's sleek bare modern living spaces in his London home echoes the boredom he experiences during the early stages of his life in London while simultaneously contrasting the more formally Victorian jam-packed parlors/library spaces/studies that he regularly encounters. I'm particularly interested in what role these spaces and the objects within them play when viewed by Hannay. He typically recognizes these spaces as concurrently comforting and threatening and finds it hard to see what he believes to be a typical English parlor or study occupied by German agents. For Hannay, spaces crammed with objects (both his own and others) gradually allow him to transform into a more domestic and more British figure. Observing how others use their own comfortable spaces and the objects within them reminds Hannay how to read the affluence or poverty of others, a skill that helps him when he is on the run and allows him to cross back and forth between reading objects as demarcations of wealth and/or of a full participation in a civilized, growing middle class society.

Hannay's innate curiosity, coupled with his sense of adventure, emerges again and again as he encounters modern objects such as telephones, cars, bicycles, and airplanes. The coupling of curiosity and adventure, especially when he comes into contact with objects, enables him to overcome the sense of uneasiness that he frequently notes when he finds himself in dangerous situations. His willing adaptation of them allows him to succeed in the field. However, he is frequently constrained by his practical (more Victorian) sensibilities. Due to his military and civilian experience, regular conversations with knowledgeable others, and his eventual voracious reading, Hannay conveniently is able to use all of these objects he encounters and can frequently predict the ways in which his enemies will use similar objects to their own benefit. These happy abilities place Hannay as an adventure hero directly descended from Stevenson and Conan Doyle, an idea reinforced when one considers how much time Hannay spends engaged in the habits of reflection, thoughtfully meditating upon the object, what it might signify, and how best to use it.

THE STUDY OF OBJECTS

The opportunity to read rooms full of objects offers a way to safely navigate the potential incompatibility of alternately examining and rejecting the object outright or learning to love the object when it represents something we are familiar with. Hannay's wealth and status as a newly arrived colonial apartment dweller operates dually, allowing him to look at objects as representations of wealth but also allowing him to scrutinize what others have selected as symbolic representations of a different form of value, one that emphasizes connections to

culture, civilization, or roots. Objects offer clues that should tell him more about the object's owner but instead generally wind up telling him more about what he himself prizes in what he sees, touches, and otherwise handles. For instance, when he first encounters a room full of strange objects in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, he is being pursued across the moors by the police and enemy agents. Here, in this moment at the brink of exhaustion, Hannay enters the seemingly safe interior space of a study:

glass on one side, and on the other a mass of books. More books showed in an inner room. On the floor, instead of tables, stood cases such as you see in a museum, filled with coins and queer stone implements.

There was a knee-hole desk in the middle, and seated at it, with some papers and open volumes before him, was the benevolent old gentleman. His face was round and shiny, like Mr. Pickwick's, big glasses were stuck on the end of his nose, and the top of his head was as bright and bare as a glass bottle. He never moved when I entered, but raised his placid eyebrows and waited on me to speak. (45)

After so many days of being hunted by both law enforcement and the spy gang, Hannay is grateful to enter a house that at first glance is completely and properly normal. The pleasant furnishings of the room, all emblematic of knowledge—books, museum cases, coins, stone tools, and a desk—draw Hannay in. This moment of entrance provides some indication as to why objects matter throughout the Hannay shockers. Looking around the room, Hannay zeroes in on objects and reads what they might signify before turning from the objects to the person that is closest to them, in this case, their owner.

In this initial encounter, Hannay is immediately besotted by the many objects that there are in the room. The “mass of books” dominates the scene, sprawling out into another room and on top of the surface of the desk. The books

are but one element in the list of vague objects that Hannay encounters and enumerates, objects that he should be able to read interpretively but ultimately cannot. However, they direct his eyes to the middle of the room, dominated as it is by the most specific object in this space, the knee-hole desk, covered with papers and books. The desk and its coverings, as well as the myriad books, coins, and museum cases, highlight this as the space of a man of scholarly inquiry and imagination, the very type of person most likely to help Hannay. Hannay cannot help but be drawn to this man, observing him as “benevolent” and noticing his “big glasses” and “the top of his head.” Comparing the man to Dickens’ Mr. Pickwick, Hannay relies here on stereotypes of the representation of intelligence. The man is polite and civil in the moment of encounter, even offering minor assistance before accidentally revealing himself as the head of the spy ring Hannay has hunted for. Desperate to belong to a community, Hannay misinterprets objects and the person who owns and uses them in this scene. Distracted by the desk and its coverings, he feels a connection that does not exist, one that is based on his own (faulty) expectations and his readings of fiction. He momentarily falters and is unable to even rely on himself. William Hasker observes in “Persons and the Unity of Consciousness” that “[t]he self must be *rational*, able to comprehend truths of various sorts that are important for the conduct of one’s life. A self must also be an *agent*, capable of acting responsibly in relation to other persons. Feeling and emotion play an essential role in life, and the self must be able to *integrate* its emotional responses with its cognitive apprehensions as well as its actions” (175). Exhausted from the chase and relieved to find the Pickwick-like archaeologist sympathetic, Hannay is briefly unable to act responsibly as self or as agent. While

his carefully ingrained habits and his photographic memory do manage to kick in, it is too little, too late. His emotional responses have been compromised by both his own exhaustion and by his exposure to the many objects the archaeologist surrounds himself with. Hannay ends up not only misreading space and objects, but also people due to a temporarily careless observational process. He is more concerned with the fleeting sensation of physical safety and allows himself to be swept away by the trappings of the room (the museum cases, the books, the desk, and the glasses) before being swept further along by his conversation with the spy himself. Failing to observe and interpret the object ends up endangering Hannay more than any of his previous adventures across the open moors have.

Although the objects in the space of the study can be read as representing wealth (at least enough wealth to maintain a life of quiet and leisurely study of a coin collection) and leisurely study (as evidenced by the collection of stone tools and books), Hannay refuses to see them as potent signifiers of the danger that he is in. For him, the study has all of the accoutrements that he expects a respectable, well-to-do academic to have on hand. There is nothing here to hint of the danger that is to come. In the space of the scholar it is easy to relax, as objects are not particularly amiss. This very relaxation, however, leads to Hannay's almost immediate imprisonment. The wary spy orders Hannay to be seized and confined in a storage cupboard.

Trapped in the storage cupboard, Hannay is forced to once again rely on his instincts, his training, and his senses to interpret the situation that he has found himself in. Knowing one's surroundings and considering the objects that one finds

in one's own environs can lead to escape opportunities. After some time meditating upon his situation and surroundings, Hannay realizes that

The more I thought about it the angrier I grew, and I had to get up and move about the room. [. . .] I groped among the sacks and boxes. I couldn't open the latter, and the sacks seemed to be full of things like dog-biscuits that smelt of cinnamon. But, as I circumnavigated the room, I found a handle in the wall which seemed worth investigating.

It was the door of a wall cupboard—what they call a “press” in Scotland,—and it was locked. I shook it, and it seemed rather flimsy. *For want of something better to do* I put out my strength on that door, getting some purchase on the handle by looping my braces round it. [. . .] I waited for a bit, and then *started to explore* the cupboard shelves.

There was a multitude of queer things there. I found an *odd vesta or two in my trouser pockets* and struck a light. It went out in a second, but showed me one thing. There was a little stock of electric torches on one shelf. I picked up one, and found it was in working order.

With the torch to help me *I investigated further.* There were bottles and cases of queer-smelling stuffs, chemicals no doubt for experiments, and there were coils of fine copper wire and yanks and yanks of a thin oiled silk. There was a box of detonators, and a lot of cord for fuses. Then away at the back of a shelf I found a stout brown cardboard box, and inside it a wooden case. I managed to wrench it open, and within lay half a dozen little grey bricks, each a couple of inches square.

I took up one, and found that it crumbled easily in my hand. Then *I smelt it and put my tongue to it. After that I sat down to think.* I hadn't been a mining engineer for nothing, and knew lentonite when *I saw it.*

With one of these bricks I could blow the house to smithereens. (49, emphasis mine)

Obviously the “multitude of queer things” cannot save Hannay on their own. He must dig deeper into his own reservoir of knowledge in order to process the necessary information that will allow for an interpretation of just what these objects represent and to begin making sense of how he will use these objects to engineer his escape. This truly wonderful assortment of objects tests Hannay's recall of the past, his patience in the present, as well as his hopes for the future. The vast array of new technologies—both factual and fictional—in this small,

enclosed space is impressive, but it is no match for the rational process of an imaginative mind fully stimulated from having come into contact with so many diverse objects. Hannay's frequent references to thought in this excerpt show his care in observing objects and in his decision-making processes.

In this scene the objects on the shelves gradually emerge as sharper and more clearly defined but are still a "multitude" of objects that Hannay tries to process as he moves on down the shelf. He surveys bottles and cases of chemicals and a coil of "fine copper wire" before he finally ends up discovering the wooden case of lentonite. Conveniently, Hannay's previous career as a mining engineer gives him the knowledge required to use these supplies, but even to an untrained eye the multitude of objects here in the cupboard provokes query. Why are these objects here? What are they going to be used for? And who placed them here? Assessing the situation, Hannay takes action after another thought session and blasts himself free of the room, injuring his arm in the process. It is better to destroy all of the individual objects, and potentially himself in the bargain, than to let these objects come together in an assemblage more potently lethal than their current form(s). If, at the beginning of this scene, the objects do not clearly stand out and require the actual illumination of light (in the form of the vesta and the torch) and the symbolic illumination of thoughtful and intelligent inquiry, they end up even less defined, mere "smithereens" by the time Hannay bursts free from the cupboard, (temporarily) triumphant. Here, in this moment, Hannay demonstrates control over both his emotions and his surroundings, both important tropes carried over from Calvinism. His confidence and reliance upon careful reflective thought are of equal importance here. The objects that Hannay sees in the closet are of

interest but ultimately not nearly as important as the greater safety of the community.

What makes this scene so compelling is the fact that Hannay relies upon his senses, imagination, and intelligence to determine his escape from this temporary prison. Cooped up in the cupboard, he turns from rage to exploration. First using touch to feel his way about the room, he tests what he comes into contact with, comparing shapes and smells to objects that he knows such as dog-biscuits and cinnamon as he tries to gain control of the situation. Using the tools that he does have (the odd vesta or two from the trouser pockets and his braces), Hannay discovers bits and pieces of information about the many dangerous objects enclosed in the cupboard. The illuminating power of meditative thought, as well as the actual illumination of the vestas and the electric torches, allows Hannay not only to see his way to freedom but to also see the very real danger that exists in the cupboard, namely, that his captors have enough explosive material to do massive damage. The “multitude of queer things” present in the cupboard, both Hannay’s own property and the items arranged so neatly on the shelves, are strange invitations to more provocative thought. Taken together they are a blending of items with real-life counterparts that a reader might be readily familiar with (the vestas, the torches), aware of but unfamiliar with (wire, detonators, cord) and the outright fanciful (the fictional explosive lentonite). The objects on display here in this cupboard matter but they are ultimately useless without someone who knows how to use them. Knowledge of what these objects are, how they work, and the possibilities that they offer are more important than the objects themselves.

In this moment, the objects in the closet do not necessarily teach Hannay a great deal more about others but they do manage to remind him of the knowledge that he possesses about himself. The confines of the cupboard may physically restrict him but they still allow him to test the boundaries of his imagination and his intelligence. Thinking about these objects, how they can be used, and why they are here at this moment in time is what adds value for Hannay, not just the fact that they can free him from his prison. Use value here is more important than any value associated with wealth or social standing. Breaking down the layers of the room from cupboard to shelf and then boxes and cases allows Hannay to physically confirm his previous but brief reading of the situation: the Pickwickian archaeologist and his team are the true danger to safety and security, not the little grey bricks of lentonite or the yanks of silk. These objects require people who are aware of how to use them. While the cupboard itself is physically oppressive, what makes it truly so is what it and its contents eventually reveal to Hannay about both his own nature and the nature of his captors¹¹⁷.

A CONFRONTATION: THE OBJECTS OF TRAFALGAR LODGE

Hannay eventually finds himself at a seaside villa named Trafalgar Lodge where he suspects the spies are located. He almost immediately begins to question his own actions as he again encounters a space full of undistinguishable objects:

¹¹⁷ Once free of his makeshift prison, Hannay continues to use his previous training in military intelligence, engineering, and his adaptive skills for escape. After several more adventures, he convinces the police of his innocence. He then heads for the coast with a government team for a final confrontation with the spies before they can flee the country with the state secrets that they have secured.

[W]hen I found myself in that neat hall the place mastered me. There were the golf clubs and tennis rackets, the straw hats and caps, the rows of gloves, the sheaf of walking-sticks, which you will find in ten thousand British homes. A stack of neatly folded coats and waterproofs covered the top of an old oak chest; there was a grandfather clock ticking; and some polished brass warming-pans on the walls, and a barometer, and a print of Chiltern winning the St. Leger. The place was as orthodox as an Anglican Church. When the maid asked me for my name I gave it automatically, and was shown into the smoking-room, on the right side of the hall.

That room was even worse. I hadn't time to examine it, but I could see some framed group photographs above the mantelpiece, and I could have sworn they were English public school or college. I had only one glance, for I managed to pull myself together and go after the maid. (77)

In this moment, as Hannay weaves his way through Trafalgar Lodge, we can see

him contending with multiple variations of the “jam-packed parlor” (Plotz 1) of

the Victorian period, all overflowing with homey British items. Already convinced

that he does not understand the “middle-class world, the folk that live in villas and

suburbs” (76), Hannay is startled by the sheer mass of objects that he sees.

Although there is a certain domestic comfort in these objects Hannay finds himself

“mastered” by both the place and the sheer number of objects that it holds. In this

moment it becomes extraordinarily difficult (for Hannay and the reader alike) to

distinguish Trafalgar Lodge, the home of the stockbroker Mr. Appleton, from the

home of any other ordinary British citizen. The room disorients Hannay to such an

extent that he gives his real name to the maid “automatically” as he is distracted by

the items around him. The items that Hannay sees in the hall can be broken up into

three primary groups: 1) items associated with sport (the golf clubs, the tennis

rackets, and the walking sticks); 2) items suggestive of chilly and cold British

weather (the barometer, the neatly folded coats, the gloves, the waterproofs); and

3) serving items (the old oak chest, the grandfather clock, the brass warming pans).

The outlier here is the “print of Chiltern winning the St. Leger”¹¹⁸ yet this print, like the other items in the hall, does nothing to tell Hannay more about just who lives in this house, which is, of course, the information that he so desperately craves. The items in the hall, if properly collected and curated, should conceivably tell Hannay some information about their owner. But these material possessions are not useful as signifiers. Hannay has believed that he is closing in on the spies, but ends up feeling just as confused as ever as he gazes around the dining-room. Every object that he sees in this space seems to be in its place, perfectly normal and British. Nothing malfunctions or is askew. The clothing and walking-sticks are all in good working order. The grandfather clock ticks on and the barometer is functional. The objects that take up space in the dining-room at Trafalgar Lodge are silent signifiers of a quiet, well-ordered ordinariness that Hannay rejects as having any place in the lives of the spies that he hunts.

Hannay’s frustration with this ephemera stems not only from the fact that he cannot use it to obtain new information about his suspects but also from the fact that this information only reinforces his vague notions about what it means to be British. His attention is drawn to the items that he can readily understand as a young man interested in sport, in this case, the golf clubs, the walking-sticks, the tennis rackets, and the horse-racing print that dominates the entire scene. These are objects that Hannay expects to see in the type of upper middle-class British home

¹¹⁸ While the St. Leger Stakes are a real horserace, run annually since 1776 in Doncaster, England by three-year-olds, there is no record of a horse named Chiltern winning (Thoroughbred Database). It is likely that this is yet another example of Buchan’s sly usage of racing as a critique of British obsession with sports. (In *The Three Hostages*, for instance, Hannay and his associate Sandy Arbuthnot agree to communicate in code using the names of famous racehorses.)

that he is in and therefore, they do not especially stand out as startling or unique. The neat, well-ordered objects in the hall ultimately are “as orthodox as an Anglican Church,” the very quintessence of Britishness and British organizations. Here at Trafalgar Lodge a new religion of orderly devotion to outdoor sports and indoor comforts is practiced but nothing is particularly shocking about this devotion. In fact, there is much to admire about the pursuit of physical activity as it is crucial to a hale and hearty life. Without physical activity, Hannay himself would not have survived as long as he has. Thus, the objects in the hall are natural. They *belong* there, which is what distracts Hannay and throws his plans off-kilter.

The other rooms at Trafalgar Hall are also mystifying. Briefly shown into the smoking-room, Hannay sees the “framed group photographs above the mantelpiece” that is he is only able to take “a glance” at. He knows that the photographs are associated with English school life but cannot gain more insight from them. As Hannay was raised in South Africa and Rhodesia, it is highly unlikely that he would be able to accurately identify which schools the clothing in the photographs are associated with, assuming that the photographs were developed in color¹¹⁹. Hannay’s passing glance reveals nothing new or useful. Once again, he proves unable to read the objects on view or the people that own them. Without the background information required to process the new information that he has obtained, he feels frustrated and uneasy. Questioning his inability to read what the material object signifies makes Hannay momentarily pause and question himself, his observational skills, and his own place in this suburban

¹¹⁹ While full color photography was not yet widely available as a process, various color enhancements were available for special photographs at this time

setting that he feels he does not belong in. As he is physically led out of the frustrating smoking-room and into the dining-room by the servant, he mentally turns back inwards, processing what he has seen.

The dining-room proves to be the most interesting space. Face to face with the three mysterious residents Hannay feels surging confidence in his “good memory and reasonable powers of observation” (78) ¹²⁰. Once again, however, Hannay’s tendency to scrutinize objects fails because he is relying upon his reading of the objects that surround the three men instead of the men themselves and their behaviorisms or their utterances. Hannay’s observations complicate the relationship between subject and object, thing and owner/user. Trying to ground himself, he looks around the new space before again finding himself disoriented. He complains about space and objects alike, observing that the “pleasant dining-room, with etchings on the walls, and a picture of an old lady in a bib above the mantelpiece” offers “nothing to connect” the men “with the moorland desperadoes, There was a silver cigarette case beside me, and I saw that it had been won by Percival Appleton, Esq., of the St. Bede’s Club, in a golf tournament” (78). With his calm again shaken by objects that he was not expecting to see, Hannay steadies his nerves by again delving deeper into his memories of past knowledge. In this moment, the concentration required to steady one’s self via concentration and recall are restorative. An overreliance on objects and the clues that they may or may not provide, we are again reminded, can confuse the ultimate object: knowing

¹²⁰ Hannay may claim that he has good powers of observation but it sometimes takes him awhile to remember what he has seen, where he has seen it, and how the information may best be used.

other people. The room is pleasant. Nothing particularly stands out. The picture of the old lady could readily be compared to any picture of an elderly lady in a typical upper-middle-class British home. The most personalized object in this space, the engraved silver cigarette case, confirms the name of the homeowner but provides no additional insight other than the fact that Mr. Appleton enjoys golf, a fact verified by the sports paraphernalia found in the entry hall. Celebrating the fact that he does not relish this suburban clutter, Hannay, like Sherlock Holmes, is at his best when he can read the data found in objects. The organized jumble of objects reflective of an average suburban life juxtaposes Hannay's own meager possessions in his starkly furnished London flat. The effect of suburban objects is paralysis with Hannay wryly acknowledging that he "felt mesmerized by the whole place" (78). There may be many objects to read in Trafalgar Lodge but ultimately, these objects are empty signifiers, revealing little about themselves or the people that use them or supposedly value them.

As a more concrete example, the moment when the plump spy tries to prove his British identity with objects, specifically, "a cigar box I brought back from the dinner," also ultimately collapses. Like all of the other objects that Hannay has observed, the cigar box signifies nothing of import. It, too, is perfectly in place, a prop for a well-dressed scene, one that too carefully mimics the expectations of a well-represented everyday life. The cigar box fails to perform as an adequate verification of identity because it fits expectations. It simply does not stand out. Everything here in this space fits too neatly. These items are all flat, non-marked, seemingly insignificant. Hannay worries about the very ordinariness of these objects. He ultimately rejects them as (mostly) empty and useless

signifiers. These objects are put here to distract from the people most associated with them, a fact that Hannay finally realizes here in the space of the dining room.

THE LESSON OF OBJECTS

Deploring the clues offered by the things of Trafalgar Lodge causes distress for Hannay as they cause him to question his judgment. Choosing to reject the object, he turns inwards for confirmation of his suspicions. Refusing to give up his theories, he ultimately pierces the deceptive veil offered by the material possessions of Trafalgar Lodge. His continual insistence on reading objects and people in his own way eventually reveals that, as he suspected, he is indeed in the base of operations for the German spy ring. For Hannay, the uncomfortable turn inwards amongst all of the comfortable objects that he *wants* to admire becomes yet another clarion call to reject the seductive trappings of material culture and to reorient the focus of his observations inwardly on his own knowledge and outwardly on the behavior of the suspected spies. It is only when he answers this call that he is able to succeed in his mission.

Looking at the interior spaces that Hannay finds himself in shows that there are perils to be found even in comfortable places. Looking more closely at the domestic spaces that Hannay encounters, Christopher Ehland notes that

The place is deliberately not barred from being pleasant and is therefore not perceived as an aberration *per se*. He is open to the idea that this nest of spies might also be a pleasant place to live, for nice people who believed in cleanliness (next door to godliness) (119).

Throughout his adventures, Hannay is intrigued by the items on display at Trafalgar Lodge, in Medina's library, or in von Stumm's study but it's ultimately the people in these spaces that makes him nervous, not the objects in the room, fully on display. The objects Hannay sees his antagonists surrounded by are

comfortable, ordinary ones that might be expected in any upper middle-class home. With the exception of the items of the archaeologist's cupboard, none of these items are out of place. They all contribute to the creation of a certain pleasant atmosphere, one that Hannay spends most of his adventures desperately longing to have for himself. The objects, as part of these settings, aren't actually all that unusual. They are something that suggests the very essence of the homey qualities allowable by Calvinist materialism. Yet something is not quite right in these rooms full of objects. The more Hannay notices in the male-dominated spaces that he visits, the more he grows to appreciate comfortable spaces filled with emblems of success and repose, yet he still recognizes these spaces as places of danger. The objects in these spaces echo one of the key paradoxes involved with Calvinistic materialism: it is acceptable to have comfortable possessions but not if they distract you from more pressing matters.

The Trafalgar Lodge episode serves as a powerful reminder that being able to read material culture for what it can tell us about people or societies can be ultimately deceptive and unproductive. The cigarette case, the photograph of the men wearing the school or club ties, and even the sporting equipment *feel* like intimate objects that *should* tell us more about the owners that use them. What Hannay discovers to his frustration is that in order for these objects to be properly read one must have pre-existing knowledge. Surrounded as he is by danger, there is not enough time to thoughtfully meditate or to process and synthesize information after a more concrete examination of the object. Despite his inability to read the objects he observes, it ultimately turns out to not matter—the objects signify nothing that is accurate or unique about their owners. Yet the objects Hannay

observes *do* signify that he himself revels in creature comforts and has a neat tendency to spot items associated with activities that he enjoys, such as smoking, sports, and restful relaxation. Hannay's fascination with objects very nearly causes him to lose sight of his original mission—to stop the leaders of the spy ring from leaving England with the information that they have obtained. The pursuit of objects and the desire to try to interpret them, to think more closely about their value, production, or whatever else they might signify is essentially a path to failure, one that Hannay cleverly sidesteps in the nick of time. The lesson in reading objects, realizing that it sometimes cannot simply be done, leads Hannay towards reading himself instead in a much abbreviated inward turn. At the close of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, the combined act of learning to read objects and himself allows him to hone his focus to see that the kindly suburbanites who occupy Trafalgar Lodge in reality menace the entire British Empire in both the form of the information they have gleaned and in their very good bourgeois disguises. The suburban façade, exposed and rejected by the adventurer, starts to crumble as Hannay uses his own objects, in this case, a “whistle” (80), to summon the police to finish rounding up the various members of the gang. Long distracted by a variety of objects and numerous threats to his own safety, Richard Hannay is finally able to look beyond the distracting clutter of Trafalgar Lodge to see the people who live there for what they truly are. The distractions of objects nearly cause him to fail at his mission but he is able to overcome this obstacle by the end of the novel.

THE OBJECT AND THE OTHER: *GREENMANTLE*

Hannay, hardened by experiences in World War I, returns in 1916's *Greenmantle*. Tasked by his former ally Sir Walter Bullivant to foil a plot involving German attempts to foment jihad in the Middle East, Hannay faces off against the beautiful archaeologist Hilda von Einem and her lieutenant, Colonel Ulrich von Stumm. Hannay assembles a team and then travels throughout Europe and portions of Turkey in disguise, collecting information. With his views colored by his mission, his fears that the war will dangerously spread, his concerns for the safety and wellbeing of his team, and his own ignorance regarding women and Islam, Hannay is especially willing to closely examine objects for context clues that could help him with his mission. Leaving his associates Sandy Arbuthnot and the eccentric American millionaire industrial John S. Blenkiron to deal with von Einem and the religious unrest in the Middle East, Hannay focuses on retrieving information from Colonel von Stumm, an incredibly powerful officer who intimidates him. The plot of *Greenmantle* is a fast-paced one. What stands out most is the continual threat of danger and Hannay's reading of objects and other men. In his observations regarding von Stumm's private living quarters, we learn more about his own tastes in home furnishings and what he finds pleasant, but we also learn more about his fears and his occasional unwillingness to separate subject from object. Hannay's fears, and the objects he finds himself surrounded by, again threaten to dangerously distract him from the greater overall mission that he has been tasked with.

Hannay's troubles interpreting rooms full of objects and people continue as a motif throughout *Greenmantle*. Hannay's experience in fighting the spies of *The*

Thirty-Nine Steps and the hordes at Loos¹²¹ has heightened his suspicion of people, especially Germans¹²², yet travel, adventure, and spycraft all serve as forms of restoration for him. Once again on the run and bearing only the possessions necessary to support his false identity, Hannay tries to read people through the objects that they own or that occupy the same spaces they do, especially when he is taken to the home of Colonel Ulrich von Stumm, a noted German officer¹²³. From here, von Stumm, described by Paul Webb as “a thuggish bully whose brawn is matched by his brains” (42) and a “caricature of a German officer” (108), evolves into a rich character, one who is “far from stupid and is, in fact, one of Hannay’s most formidable opponents, with an almost nightmarish tenacity of purpose checked only by a Buchanesque mixture of audacity and good luck” (108). Hannay begins to realize this reality most forcefully when he is shown into von Stumm’s study, a space that highlights von Stumm’s “softer side” (108).

THE OBJECT AND THE OTHER: VON STUMM’S STUDY

To reiterate, Hannay recognizes von Stumm as a dangerous, intelligent, and resourceful enemy. But it is not until he enters von Stumm’s home and sees his

¹²¹ *Greenmantle* opens with Hannay and his associate Sandy Arbuthnot both recovering from physical injuries received in battle.

¹²² While this older, more battle-hardened Hannay repeatedly engages in anti-German rhetoric, he does manage to find sympathy for three specific German people caught up in the war: Herr Gaudian, a noted railway engineer; a woodcutter’s wife who helps him when he comes down with malaria while on the run; and most bizarrely, the Kaiser himself (127-128).

¹²³ In German, “stumm” means silent, non-speaking, dumb, or mute. In *Greenmantle* Colonel von Stumm does speak, but does so rarely. His physical actions, his surroundings, and his appearance all seemingly tell Hannay more about this fierce antagonist than von Stumm’s own words do.

adversary's personal space and the objects that he most values that Hannay truly begins to be fearful for both his own safety and the success of his mission¹²⁴:

We went up a staircase to a room at the end of a long corridor. Von Stumm locked the door behind him and laid the key on a table. *That room took my breath away, it was so unexpected.* In place of the grim bareness of downstairs here was a place of luxury and colour and light. [. . .] It was very large, but low in the ceiling, and *the walls were full of little recesses with statues in them. A thick grey carpet of velvet pile covered the floor, and the chairs were low and soft and upholstered like a lady's boudoir.* [. . .] *A French clock on the mantelpiece told me that it was ten minutes past eight. Everywhere on little tables and in cabinets was a perfusion of nicknacks, and there was some beautiful embroidery framed on screens.* At first sight you would have said it was a woman's drawing-room.

But it wasn't. I soon saw the difference. There had never been a woman's hand in that place. It was the room of a man who had a fashion for frippery, who had a perverted taste for *soft delicate things*. It was the complement to his bluff brutality. I began to see the queer other side to my host, that evil side which gossip had spoken of as not unknown in the German army. The room seemed a horribly unwholesome place, and I was more than ever afraid of Stumm¹²⁵.

The hearthrug was a wonderful old Persian thing, all faint greens and pinks. As he stood on it he looked uncommonly like a bull in a china shop. *He seemed to bask in the comfort of it, and sniffed like a satisfied animal.*" (129, emphasis mine)

Although Hannay may have favorably responded to the mannishly companionable suburban objects of Trafalgar Lodge (the walking sticks, gloves, cigarette cases and the like), here he more carefully considers the comfortable and decorative objects that make von Stumm's space so breathtaking. Through the usage of words such as "luxury," "pleasant," and "beautiful" Buchan heightens the tension that Hannay is already experiencing inside von Stumm's home, a tension first truly

¹²⁴ For the sake of my study, I have chosen to concentrate solely on Hannay's interactions with other men and their personal spaces and things. However, *Greenmantle* features a female villain (an extreme rarity in the adventure genre), the beautiful and talented German archaeologist Hilda von Einem. (Colonel von Stumm must take orders from her.) Hannay never truly spends a great deal of time in von Einem's private spaces, leaving that task to his colleague Sandy.

¹²⁵ Hannay regularly refuses to use any German honorific titles.

highlighted when Hannay notes that he is “uncomfortable” in this space¹²⁶. This room, one of the most personal private spaces in Buchan’s “shockers,” stands out as one that defies expectations. Surveying the room, Hannay picks out the decorative elements of the room for his focus, quickly glancing from statues to the carpet before proceeding to chairs, the French clock, the embroidery, and most tellingly, “the perfusion of nicknacks.” The sheer number of objects and the smell of the incense that perfumes the air all work to temporarily disrupt the guest from ascertaining an idea of what these articles might signify about their owner. Viewed as they are through Hannay’s anxiety over his possible discovery and his obvious dislike of von Stumm, the objects are rejected in a moment that is problematic at best due to von Stumm’s sexual orientation (Kestner “Richard Hannay” 89).

Hannay (who frequently travels in the homosocial spaces of army life, the mining camp, and the world of the professional sportsman) outright shuns the tastefully organized room as “soft and delicate” “frippery.” He views and accepts these objects as signifiers of the “queer other side” of von Stumm. Hannay might initially recognize the objects as “pleasant” and “beautiful” but he outright refuses to recognize them as anything other than “horribly unwholesome” when he must consider their owner, a man who violates all of Hannay’s standards of proper, wholesome, manly and heteronormative conduct, at the same time. Hannay’s contradictions regarding taste and comfort culminate in his reading of the “perfusion of nicknacks” or the “French clock” owned by von Stumm turn into a reading of von Stumm himself as “a new thing in my experience.” In considering

¹²⁶ Naturally, Hannay would be uncomfortable given his role as a spy but there is something about the physicality of von Stumm himself, as well as the space, that hinders Hannay’s accurate assessment of this situation.

the room, Hannay chooses to transfer his distrust of the man onto the man's objects, questioning their selection and arrangement.

As von Stumm stands on the hearth rug, we are exposed to a moment that very briefly collapses the physical distinctions between owner and object. The hearth rug is suddenly one of the most specifically described items in this entire scene, with Hannay identifying it as “wonderful,” “old,” and “Persian” before moving on to describing its colors. Hinting at the value he sees here in the rug with his emphasis on “wonderful” and “old,” the rug simultaneously belongs in the room and is out of place due to von Stumm's physical presence. The owner's presence—and his occupation and happiness among his own objects— becomes the marvel to behold, not the object itself. Instinctively drawn to von Stumm's stance on the carpet, Hannay considers the connection between rug and owner an unnatural one but acknowledges von Stumm's appreciation of his possessions. When Hannay looks at von Stumm, he sees a collector “bask[ing] in the comfort of it” in a “satisfied” manner. Paul Webb astutely remarks that the study, with its lush décor and its proud owner marks a space filled with “the softness of decay” (108). Hannay finds von Stumm's politics and his sadism despicable but it is the pleasure that von Stumm takes in the luxuriant furnishings of his study (which Hannay typically does not mind in the least) that he ultimately finds most repellent. Enjoying the comforts of home suggests a shared humanity, one that Hannay cannot endorse or accept if he is to defeat von Stumm and his partners in their plot. While Hannay cannot openly and immediately critique the objects that occupy this space because they are “pleasant” and “wonderful,” he can and does critique their owner as brutal and animalistic, a complete contrast to the objects in his

possession. For Hannay, no matter how attractive these items are, they are owned by the enemy, one that Hannay refuses to recognize as wholesome. In examining von Stumm's objects, Hannay can only read these objects as marked by von Stumm's vitality. In looking at these objects, he is unable to see beyond his own interests, tastes, and dislikes. His ability to reason and judge is faulty in this moment because of the dangerous aspects of his mission. Hannay is so fixated on survival and facing and overcoming his enemy that he rejects these objects. They aren't his and can't be used for escape. He must concentrate all of his mental efforts on preserving his disguise and thus cannot afford here, in this moment, to take advantage of the lessons that these objects could offer in further developing interiority. The objects here are essentially distractions meant to ease his sense of danger but instead only end up heightening it.

Furnished as it is with trappings that Hannay only views as feminine or foreign (the French clock, the Persian rug), von Stumm's study markedly differs from the places that Hannay typically views as comforting masculine spaces littered with sports paraphernalia and the trophies of the hunt. The muddling of masculine and feminine that occurs in von Stumm's room casts a haziness over the idea that there are separate appointed spaces in the ideal home for men, women, the family, and visitors. With his continued emphasis on male spaces and male objects, including the studies of the archaeologist and Sir Walter, as well as the smoking-room in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Hannay is unable to ever fully engage with the items that he encounters. He ends up rejecting his own initial responses to the beautiful and comforting sensuality of the decorated room, transferring his dislike of the collector onto the collection of objects that decorate the space. The

objects become a way for Hannay's strikingly noticeable emphasis on "difference," "fashion," "frippery," "soft and delicate things," "perverted," "queer other," "evil," and finally "horribly unwholesome" to stand out in a way that can certainly be read as a condemnation of von Stumm's sexual preferences¹²⁷. Yet more importantly, this critique of objects fundamentally serves as a powerful indictment of an inability to see beyond personal fears and to read objects apart from their owners. Without a more thorough and openly accepting adventurous interiority, Hannay's homophobia dooms him to not appreciate beauty when it is before him. The complications of the relationship between object and collector becomes too much for him in this state, too overwhelming to deal with in either a more productive or a more provocative fashion. Forced to rely heavily upon his own ideas of manliness and habit, Hannay views von Stumm himself as the object that does not belong in this space. Unlike the Trafalgar Lodge episode, here Hannay is so obsessed with his mission (and, subconsciously, by his homophobia) that he is only momentarily thrown off the trail by the objects in the room. Instead of seeing pleasant items that might (or might not) reveal more about their owner, Hannay can only see the owner and only in the way he wants to see him. At this moment, he can very well read himself and, ostensibly von Stumm, but he is incapable of fully engaging in the act of reading objects. In looking at the objects that von Stumm has selected for his own pleasure and comfort, Hannay fiercely rejects them all as out of place and corrupt because of their presumed contact with the collector. The items in von Stumm's study, juxtaposed against those of Trafalgar Lodge, are too marked by

¹²⁷ For more on von Stumm's sexuality, see Kestner's afterword in *Masculinities in British Adventure Fiction*.

von Stumm's presence as Hannay attempts to view them. He is unable to allow his imagination to roam or to more fully speculate about what these objects signify. He ends up escaping both von Stumm and von Stumm's objects but is badly shaken by the experience.

Hannay may briefly other objects during the adventure of *Greenmantle* but only the objects of von Stumm's study prove simultaneously enchanting and distracting. For Hannay, these objects reflect his uneasiness regarding his mission, his new close companionships with other men, and his pleasure in small decorative comforts while men he knows are fighting in the trenches of France. It becomes safest to outright reject these objects and their signifiers because of their connections to the dangerous von Stumm. Rejection of the objects and their distracting qualities becomes the prudent course, rather than continuing to dwell on the object for possible lessons.

In *Greenmantle*, just as in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, Hannay is finally successful in accomplishing his mission thanks to happy chances of luck, his ability to turn protectively inwards in moments of crisis, his knowledge of basic outdoor survival skills, and a vast array of reliable and trustworthy associates always ready to assist him. Unlike the adventurous heroes of Stevenson, who sometimes also rely on their ability to understand, interpret, and repurpose objects, Buchan's Hannay does his best when he is able to instead solely rely upon dry facts. Fearing von Stumm, and thus, by extension, his objects, Hannay simply turns away in fear and disgust before moving through still more adventures during the war in both *Greenmantle* and *Mr. Standfast* that also require him to continually

negotiate the many complexities that exist at the interstice of subject-object relations

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO DOMESTIC CLUTTER:

THE THREE HOSTAGES

The next encounter with objects that I explore takes place in 1924's *The Three Hostages*. Hannay has made it through still more adventurous spycraft in 1919's *Mr. Standfast* and has retired from active military service with the rank of Brigadier. Now married and a proud father, as well as the owner of a country home (Fosse Manor) in the Cotswolds, he has settled down to a relaxing life. Yet Hannay finds this quieter life lacking the mental stimulation that comes about from either the process of physical adventure or from the act of observing other men using or appreciating objects. The plot of *The Three Hostages* allows Hannay to return to foiling schemes, to observing other men in their own object-filled spaces, and to thinking about what those objects might signify. In his attempts to rescue the titular hostages and defuse a plot aimed at Britain's economic and political interests, Hannay finally learns to accept his own sense of style, taste, and value, all while considering both his own objects and those associated with other people. He still takes extreme pleasure in the outdoors and in physical sport, but throughout *The Three Hostages* Hannay learns how to navigate his new position as a respected member of the post-war community, a status marked by his own collection of homey objects.

Jaded by the war and his experiences, Hannay observes in the opening paragraph of 1924's *The Three Hostages* that "[i]t was jolly to see the world coming to life again, and to remember that this patch of England was my own, and

all these wild objects, so to speak, members of my little household” (477). In this opening glimpse, he considers himself owning “this patch of England,” up to and including the wildlife that occupies his land. Casting aside the small pleasant comforts of spaces such as those von Stumm chose for his own furnishings, Hannay instead relishes his ownership and domination of the land, contrasting the smaller, more intimate, individual bits of material culture chosen by his nemesis. Hannay tries to create a space for himself inside the doors of Fosse Manor that is solely his, yet he ends up thwarted and trapped by the domestic in this effort. He describes his room as

modelled on Sir Walter Bullivant’s room in his place on the Kennet, as I had promised myself seven years ago. I had meant it for my own room where I could write and read and smoke, but Mary would not allow it. [. . .] [S]he had staked out a claim on the other side of my writing-table. I have the old hunter’s notion of order, but it was useless to strive with Mary, so now my desk was littered with her letters and needlework, and Peter John’s toys and picture-books were stacked in the cabinet where I kept my fly-books, and Peter John himself used to make a kraal every morning inside an upturned stool on the hearth-rug. (480, emphasis mine)

This particular setting bares traces of both Sir Walter Bullivant’s space—after all, Hannay outright admits that he has modeled the space on Sir Walter’s study at his country home—as well as von Stumm’s study, as evidenced by the more feminine touch of Mary’s “needlework” and “the hearth-rug.” Hannay’s confession that he has planned this space as a private room of his own where he can write, read, and smoke or visit with friends is an interesting one. While the archetypical hero of adventure fiction typically relies upon homosocial relationships and well-ordered spaces, here Hannay is plausibly adjusting into a more domestic life after his many adventures. The previous spaces that he has visited (the archaeologist’s, Sir Walter’s, and von Stumm’s studies, as well as Trafalgar Lodge) are spaces that are

all missing a woman's presence. Mary's letters and needlework and Peter John's toys mark the space more dominantly than Hannay's desk, hearthrug, or stool can. What stands out as Hannay's own are a cabinet filled with fly-books and a detective novel he has been reading (480). As with so many objects in Buchan's novels, none of these items are described with enough detail to provide more than a cursory glance into Hannay's new staid interests in a man of leisure: fishing and reading. However, read alongside his statement that he has "an old hunter's notion of order," it is safe to assume that he is struggling to come to grips with his new life as a retired and leisurely family man caught up in a whirlwind of domestic clutter. Despite this newfound calm, Hannay still yearns for the maelstrom of adventure.

Hannay has regularly indicated a discomfort among small comfortable objects during his previous adventures but here, in his own home, surrounded by his own items, he still demonstrates this discomfort. His own items are overwhelmed by those associated with his wife and child. Hannay's own objects feel unmarked, empty, virtually free of signifiers about his new pursuits and his new persona. What makes these objects (combined with Mary and Peter John's items in a charming jumble indicative of domestic harmony) valuable is that they position Hannay as someone who prioritizes order and relaxation. The clutter of the fireside scene illustrates Hannay as finally successfully practicing the tenets of Calvinistic materialism. Yet Hannay never truly has time to appreciate order or relaxation, either in his status as a family man or in his role as an adventurer. These objects clutter the study but they serve as powerful markers of Hannay's previous successes.

Grant Allan's 1880 essay "The Philosophy of Drawing-Rooms" posits that people need "a place to lounge in" (322). The smoking room and dining room at Trafalgar Lodge and von Stumm's little room served this purpose, as does Sir Walter's study. Hannay's acknowledgement that he has "promised myself" a similar space recalls the importance the Victorians placed on having a space to either receive visitors or to be one's own self in, a place that could tell others about status and success. Allen's observation that "[w]e want a room where we can take our ease after dinner, read our paper or magazine in peace, and converse with our friends at leisure" (322) sums up why such a space is so important to Hannay, a man without longstanding roots of his own. Others may use their spaces as a sort of personal museum of important objects (the archaeologist in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, for example), but Hannay initially and enthusiastically embraces the approach identified by Allan: privileging the room as a space for lounging and for leisure. The intrusion of his family, however, foils this plan. The study at Fosse Manor is comfortable and a harmonious, cheerfully familial domestic space. Yet the space is not Hannay's own.

Although he may occasionally like what he sees in other people's spaces, he remains unclear and uncertain as to what he would truly like in his own. He wants the comforts of domestic life as seen at Trafalgar Lodge or better still, the pleasant calming safety and personal clutter of Sir Walter's study. With his wife and child at his side, he can achieve the ideals of a secure domestic life but he must sacrifice the personal clutter he desires for himself. The family unit is more important than his own individual desires. Hannay may complain, but his complaints are only momentary. Read together, the objects in his study symbolize

a harmoniously tranquil family life where Hannay has, at least temporarily, successfully immersed himself into the clutter of the domestic household¹²⁸. Here in the study of Fosse Manor, situated among the clutter of domestic life, Hannay can finally be seen as a successful, useful member of society. However, the pleasant jumble of family clutter distracts Hannay's attention from the world at large and the problems of others, which he is unusually good at solving.

This momentary domestic bliss amidst the detritus of everyday life is interrupted by Dr. Greenslade, a family friend who has had adventures in Africa, the Middle East, and China before becoming an English country doctor. Hannay admires Greenslade and calls him "a chap with [. . .] an insatiable curiosity about everything in heaven and earth" (479) and "the best sort of company" (479) before acknowledging that without the doctor's influence he is in danger of "tak[ing] root in the soil and put[ting] out shoots, for I have a fine natural talent for vegetating" (479), something that Hannay has never before given evidence of. Now part of a family unit and enjoying domestic bliss, Hannay is close to completely isolating himself from the more difficult concerns of the community. During Dr. Greenslade's visit a further interruption in the form of a note from Sir Walter arrives, informing the Hannays of a plot involving three kidnap victims who seemingly have nothing in common with each other. Although Mary pleads for her husband to get involved, he is loath to do so. He once again returns to the field in an effort to save the victims and to save himself from forming roots amidst the

¹²⁸ The outside patch of England may be the closest he gets to fulfilling his yearning for a space of his own filled with his own possessions, in this case, the wild animals.

mass of domestic clutter in his study, which he can never fully separate from now that he is a family man.

While the Hannay novels are very much interested in what Douglas S. Mack has referred to as “middle-class values and commercial success” (215), as is *The Three Hostages*, they are also indicative of Buchan’s “preoccupation with character” (Wittig 155). The objects that Hannay observes more thoroughly pinpoint his own character and what he values in both objects and other people. Significantly, the objects that others furnish their own spaces with remind Hannay that he can be wrong, that his own individualist readings of the world are not as fully developed as they should be, and that his imagination and emotional response need to be controlled. Rooms full of objects regularly remind Hannay that he needs to reorient and readjust himself, to always rely upon his innate sense of “interior mistrust” (Wittig 155). Only with this reorientation can Hannay succeed as a character and as a member of the greater community. Once he has learned not only his own values, but also the values of Empire¹²⁹, then and only then is he able to completely foil the dangerous machinations of plotters. But Hannay, like the reader, cannot help being seduced by objects.

READING OBJECTS/READING MEN

Objects are not all that seduces Hannay. In uncovering the ways the hostage-taking plot threatens to destabilize both the post-war economic and political order, Hannay meets its fascinating leader, the charming Dominick Medina. Attractive, rich, well-known and well-regarded, socially connected, and

¹²⁹ His learning process is greatly accelerated in the trenches of France and on the plains of Turkey,

combining attributes of both the physical adventurer and the poet, Medina proves to be a compellingly challenging foil for Hannay. At first drawn to Medina, who is “one of the finest shots living, [. . . has] done tall things in the exploration way” and “the devil of a fellow as a partisan leader in South Russia,” Hannay eventually heeds the warnings of his wartime companion Sandy Arbuthnot and proceeds to view Medina with a rare combination of both suspicion and admiration (502).

He is also very attracted to Medina’s strengths as an autodidact, his rugged individualism, and his tasteful display of “commercial success” (Mack 215). For instance, in recalling the first time that Hannay is invited to visit Medina following a dinner at a club, he remembers the complicated response he has to the objects that populate Medina’s rooms¹³⁰ more immediately and concretely than either Medina’s words or actions:

I followed him as he opened the front door with a latch-key. He switched on a light, which lit the first landing of the staircase but left the *hall in dusk. It seemed to be a fine place full of cabinets, the gilding of which flickered dimly.* [. . .] I had the sensation of mounting to a great *height in a queer shadowy world.*

“*This is a big house for a bachelor,*” I observed.

“*I’ve a lot of stuff, books and pictures and things, and I like it round me.*”

He opened a door and ushered me into an *enormous* room, which must have occupied the whole space on that floor. It was *oblong*, with deep bays at each end, and it was lined from floor to ceiling with books. Books, too, were piled on the tables, and sprawled on a big flat couch which was drawn up before the fire. It wasn’t an ordinary gentleman’s library, provided by the bookseller at so much a yard. It was *the working collection of a scholar, and the books had that used look which makes them the finest tapestry for a room.* The place was lit with lights on small tables, and *on a*

¹³⁰ In his discussion of the setting of *The Three Hostages*, Neil Davie comments that unlike other Buchan works that feature “wide-open spaces” or “European capitals,” here Buchan chooses to instead focus in on “claustrophobic dimly-lit libraries and sinister doctors’ surgeries.” (Davie paragraph 3)

big desk under a reading-lamp were masses of papers and various volumes with paper slips in them. It was workshop as well as library. (518)

At this particular moment, Hannay still does not know much about Medina

or his character. Once again invited into a man's private abode, he willingly enters, hoping to gain new information about his adversary. The initially dusky hall does not provide much data for him to interpret but the thickly carpeted stairs here hearken back to the thickly carpeted floor of von Stumm's study. While von Stumm's space, like the other spaces surveyed by Hannay, is compact and, in some way, representative of its occupant's interests (or at least his delight in the beautiful and antique), here on Hill Street in Medina's lair Hannay cannot help but notice size. Using terms such as "great height," "big house," "lots of stuff," "enormous," "deep," and finally, "lined from floor to ceiling" suggests the scope of the man's interests. The previous spaces Hannay has observed contrast Medina's library. Trafalgar Lodge, filled as it was with sporting equipment and photographs, offered a combination of clutter, spaciousness, and companionship, all the often illusory comforts of a properly domestic British home and von Stumm's study offered the light decorative comforts that he prominently and proudly displayed in a small contained space. Here, in Medina's "substantial" Hill Street lodgings, we are presented with a man using more space than he needs to house himself and his "lot of stuff, books and pictures and things." For Medina to be comfortable, he needs his objects arranged around him, fully available for him to command, to use both as reference and as starting point for something new, as referenced in Hannay's idea that Medina's upper-floor space is both "workshop and library." Glancing around the library reinforces Medina as a dangerous, intelligent, scholarly foil to Hannay.

Once again finding himself in another man's space, looking at another man's objects, Hannay finds himself distracted from his mission and the pursuit of his own interests by objects and trying to figure out just what those objects signify. Hannay's interest in trying to figure out details regarding the organization behind *The Three Hostages* plot is temporarily halted in this scene. In looking at Medina's library, he is dazzled, unable to see any potential menace signified by so many useful objects on display. That these books are carefully chosen and obviously appreciated by Medina strikes Hannay as very favorable. Hannay's pause here suggests his appreciation for Medina's love of reading and his unwillingness to acknowledge that he is facing yet another ruthless but highly intelligent enemy. Indeed, Hannay's reading of the distracting objects of Medina's library proves so faulty in this moment that he very nearly reveals his mission to Medina. The distraction of another man's objects, here, in this space, threatens both Hannay's personal safety and the safety of the nation. The books in the library are so wide-ranging in their topics that they are ultimately empty signifiers.

This moment in the library complicates the notion of value, especially as housed in the act of reading and in books themselves¹³¹. None of the books particularly stand out here in this moment. Indeed, the books are lined from floor to ceiling, piled on tables, and in a moment that evokes personification, "sprawled on a big flat couch". Books are everywhere. What stands out is the fact that these

¹³¹ When the reader first encounters Hannay in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, he describes himself as frequently and enjoyably reading a newspaper. He also seems to have a good working knowledge of sportsman's guides and the latest adventure stories by Kipling and Conrad. Later, in *Mr. Standfast*, he shows an appreciation for poetry and the great British classics. Hannay's emergent literary tastes duly aid him in interpreting clues.

books are a “working collection of a scholar,” “used,” and simultaneously as decorative as “the finest tapestry.” In reading these books, Hannay points to a possible economic value for Medina’s library when he sees the books as not the stuff of “an ordinary gentleman’s library, provided by the bookseller at so much a yard.” The decorative quality of books is hinted at here in this moment. Hannay himself never indicates his own spaces are as full of books but he does read voraciously (480). The keyword in this idea of the “ordinary gentleman’s library, provided by the bookseller at so much a yard” is “ordinary.” Hannay scorns the gaudy, tasteless materialism associated with buying a pre-formed library from a bookseller¹³² and instead prefers collections that are assembled by unique collectors for their own private use and enjoyment¹³³. In observing the library full of books, Hannay notes that Medina, just like the volumes scattered all around the room, is worth reading. Medina’s books dominate the enormous space in a way that he himself physically cannot manage to do. The space of the library and the many book-objects inside seemingly shows Medina as a good steward of his resources and as blessed with faculties in many subjects. Hannay is suspicious of Medina, but the many positive qualities of the objects in this space works to temporarily halt his misgivings.

RETHINKING THE “TREASURY OF BEAUTIFUL THINGS”

¹³² Grant Allan gently pokes fun at this idea in his 1880 essay on the topic of decorating dressing-rooms, associating the practice with the nouveau riche, especially Australians and other colonials.

¹³³ During his tenure at Thomas Nelson, Buchan was one of the guiding figures behind updating and expansion of the Nelson Classics series of literary classics.

The final moment of an encounter with a space filled with objects that I wish to consider occurs when Hannay later returns to Medina's house. Hannay, by now keenly aware that Medina is behind the kidnapping of the hostages, assumes the part of a duped disciple as he tries to form a rescue plan. Yet playing this part wears him down more than any of his previous adventures. In order to restore his sense of equilibrium, Hannay journeys home for a brief visit to his beloved family and his own objects before setting forth once again for London. Refreshed and rejuvenated, he accepts an invitation to dine at Hill Street, which he describes as

wonderful treasury of beautiful things. It was not the kind of house I fancied myself, being too full of museum pieces, and all the furniture strictly correct according to period. I like rooms in which there is a pleasant jumble of things, and which look as if homely people had lived in them for generations. The dining-room was panelled in white, with a Vandyck [sic] above the mantel-piece and a set of gorgeous eighteenth-century prints on the walls. [...] We never went near the library on the upper floor, but sat after luncheon in a little smoking-room at the back of the hall, which held my host's rods and guns in glass cabinets, and one or two fine heads of deer and ibex. (538, emphasis mine)

Of all of Hannay's spatial experiences, here we finally have the one that tells us the most about his own attitudes about the objects that he sees, the people that he observes directly associated with those objects, and most importantly, his own private personal tastes. Previously only allowed into Medina's inner sanctum (in this case, the library), now Hannay is exposed to a different part of Medina's "wonderful treasury of beautiful things," a house that comes across more as something designed and curated for curious visiting prying eyes. This exposure forces Hannay to finally confess that he prefers objects that aren't as clean, well-ordered, or decorative. He favors variety, the "pleasant jumble of things," and the comforts of a happy domestic life. It has taken this particular moment of danger, located in this space "full of museum pieces" "and all the furniture strictly correct

according to period” for Hannay to realize that he likes and indeed misses the familial clutter of his study at Fosse Manor.

Yet Hannay once again spends most of his time looking at objects rather than looking at the people associated with those objects. Part of what makes Medina such an attractive foil is the way that he effectively reflects Hannay as what Stephen Donovan has termed as “a new type of civilian man-of-action: fearless, self-sufficient, polyglot, technologically savvy, informed in local as well as international politics and mindful of the complexity of imperial history and policy” (54). Indeed, Medina mirrors Hannay far more closely than his previous enemies have. Part of this derives from the fact that Medina is a villain of the domestic space, one who threatens harm to Britain from within, contrasting the German villains of the previous novels who were state operators threatening harm from without. Medina’s rich furnishings are emblematic of a type of commercial success but it is a sterile meaningless one, not the type of success best associated with a prosperous member of the elect. The white walls of his dining room, for instance, suggest a frozen, barren state that calls into question whether or not Medina (and his motivations) are worthy. The sterility of Medina’s chambers can be read as those of a man pulled in too many directions, forced to give into societal dictates yet simultaneously drawn to revolting against those very same dictates. Furnished as they are, the rooms of Medina are cool and impersonal. Ultimately, the coldness of Medina’s sterile white dining room with all of its carefully chosen objet d’art stands out all the more when compared to Hannay’s own cheerful pear-tree fire warmed study.

In this moment, he recognizes that the value of happiness, love, and home comforts are far more important than the demands of fashionable taste or the outright display of monetary value involved with the decoration of a space such as Medina's. A man without his own long-term roots, the Scottish-South African-British Hannay appreciates the appearance of familial and historical roots when they appear in a place where "homely people had lived in them for generations." There is no indication of such roots in Medina's gorgeous dining-room with its lush, vivid, priceless artwork so rampantly on display¹³⁴. Once again, Hannay experiences discomfort among all of the goods so profusely and proudly displayed by other men.

Seemingly trapped, Hannay must rely upon his reserves of self-confidence to continue playing the part that he has assumed. The unnaturally stiff surroundings and the presence of servants all remind Hannay that this is a place that he is not comfortable in, a place where he feels every inch a colonial outsider, no matter his own commercial or militaristic successes. Nevertheless, there is hope. Rejuvenated as he is by his visit with his family, his own domestic objects, his innate but undefined Calvinistic attributes, and buoyed by his recent interactions with close

¹³⁴ These roots are also not on display in von Stumm's quarters but the pleasure that he takes in his surroundings, seen by Hannay as spectacle, is much more obvious. Likewise, although there is an attempt to give the sense of rootedness at Trafalgar Lodge, it is a shallow, illusory rootedness at best but "Mr. Appleton" and his colleagues show contentment and satisfaction in their surroundings, the type of contentment and satisfaction that Hannay sometimes questions in himself in relation to his new life at Fosse. Medina's house is the most gorgeously appointed set of rooms that Hannay enters during his adventures, yet a sense of the pleasures and privileges of ownership is not evident to Hannay. It's the pleasure associated with the possession and enjoyment of things that Hannay admires and that he does not see in the Hill Street house.

ally (and fellow Scot) Sandy Arbuthnot, Hannay stymies Medina's plot aimed at disrupting nationalistic unity. As Douglas Kerr notes, part of Hannay's triumph comes from Buchan's idea that "modernism [. . .] is a matter of taking objects in hand and of having faith in yourself" (130). It is important to note that Hannay cannot ever completely have faith in himself in the gorgeously furnished formal rooms of his adversaries unless he turn inwards.

This particular scene exposes Hannay as finally overcoming the sensual temptations of the object. The decorative qualities of the museum pieces so carefully curated for Medina's dining room are meant to show his success and popularity but are ultimately hollow. They are meant to signify Medina's power as well, but Hannay, newly rejuvenated by his visit home and relying on his interiority, recognizes that true power is best signified by the pleasant jumble of things assembled by and associated with families. Medina's objects here may fulfill the Calvinist criteria for possession, namely, as a symbol of one's personal status as a steward of resources, but the sterility of the room suggests a failure at fully achieving the other criteria of demonstrating status as a member of the elect. The objects of Medina are meant to distract and deceive others while at the same time providing comfort for himself. Now that Hannay is finally more comfortable with his ownership of his own objects, he is less likely to fall into this trap.

If Hannay can recognize the uniquely individualistic tastes of the men that he is fighting and can even appreciate some of their qualities, he also senses that there is something wrong with them and what they most value, especially as signaled by their artistic displays of prints, needlework and statues, or, as here in Medina's space, the priceless van Dyke above the mantelpiece. Hannay is slightly

more comfortable in the little smoking-room filled with sporting equipment and the trophies of the hunt, but even the trophies have been carefully curated, with only the best selected for display. Everything here that Hannay sees (outside of the library) is tasteful but ultimately empty and meaningless, incapable of suggesting anything about its owner and what he most likes. The display of tasteful objects instead suggests decay and corruption, something not quite right. Forearmed with his knowledge about Medina and finally feeling comfortable with his own sense of taste, Hannay is finally free to forthrightly announce his own preferences for the vague but homey charms of the appropriately furnished domestic hearth. This rejection proves, just as it has so many times before, to be the key to his survival.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, though objects may indeed enchant and stimulate the imagination, a close reading of John Buchan's Richard Hannay novel sequence suggests that overthinking objects and what they might signify can distract from more important tasks. Buchan's work temporarily highlights an engagement with objects as something of value, but only if the person doing the assessment has the self-knowledge and the self-confidence necessary for understanding. The Hannay novels successfully and effectively draw attention to the importance of the comforts of home and carving out a place of one's own within the confines of a community. Tracing the trajectory of Hannay's difficult and fraught relationship with the various objects that populate *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *Greenmantle*, and *The Three Hostages*, Buchan succeeds at formulating a solidly Calvinist (and Scottish) relationship with personal property that allows Hannay to draw his own conclusions and eventually make his own selections of objects that finally

demarcate him as both successful in his calling(s) and his community. Throughout his adventures, Hannay, brought into contact with the objects of others, learns how to develop his own sense of appreciation for objects. He also learns to recognize them as powerful distracters from more important tasks, such as interacting with others. The Hannay novels succeed in questioning the extremely vexing relationship between people and property, man and material, subject and object.

The adventurous “shockers” authored by Buchan show a character in flux, driven by a sense of boredom and a desire to try to fit into an England he has never truly known. Hannay, by the end of his experiences, is ready to settle down amongst his own comfortable clutter, in his own home. He remains willing to help others but is more and more unwilling to remove himself from the comforts of home. He gradually assumes the role of the quintessential English country gentleman that he saw the German spies performing so well in their house at the end of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*. Embracing what he learns about objects, taste, and comfort during his adventures, he emerges with his interests centered very solidly in Victorian middle class values. While he enjoys the social privileges that his rank affords him, he prefers to be at home and at rest in his study, surrounded by his own comfortable objects, or out fishing, hunting, or hiking. He still values the mental exercise of adventure but prefers to no longer participate in the rigorous physicality that was required in some of his earlier quests. The desire to remain securely among his own objects (and his family, too) tests Hannay’s resolve to continue adventuring later in his life. As he accumulates more and more possessions and experiences the trauma of adventure again and again, Hannay grows from a bored man that yearns for the freedom of the outdoors to a more staid

and prosperous citizen, willing to endure the hardships of the outdoors but vastly preferring the comforts of home. Surrounded by the objects of his own choosing in his own home and with his own family, Hannay ends his career as an adventurer having successfully avoided the showy and affected vulgar displays of his various antagonists, instead choosing a more tasteful (and useful) display that subtly highlights his own place in a stable, wealthy society.

Buchan's contribution to the adventure rests in the fact that Hannay can enjoy his own acquisitions (the country manor, the ideal young family, and the detritus of rural family life) without the guilt that haunts Stevenson's Jim Hawkins at the conclusion of *Treasure Island*. In the end, Hannay proves a strong exemplar of the conflict between individualism and the needs of the community, a self-sacrificing hero capable of assessing the (sometimes faulty) decisions he makes based on his readings of objects and people. The Hannay adventures ultimately celebrate self-knowledge and growth over materialistic gains. Despite his sufferings and his occasionally problematic attitudes, Hannay is a hero who succeeds at his calling and deserves his "pile" as a commemoration of that fact. By the time of his final adventures, Hannay has finally achieved a comfortable level of Calvinistic materialism for himself, one that highlights his status as a member of community and as a capable steward (and administrator) of resources. After so many damaging encounters with the distracting objects of other men, he has finally earned the comfortable feeling of rootedness provided by the domestic clutter that surrounds him in Fosse Manor.

AFTERWORD

“I want to lead the Victorian life, surrounded by exquisite clutter.”
—Freddie Mercury, *The Circus Magazine Tapes*—

“Does this spark joy?”
—Marie Kondo, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* (41)—

On September 18, 2014, while *Exquisite Clutter* was in development, nearly 3.63 million Scots took to the polls to vote on a referendum asking if Scotland should once again become an independent nation. The vote followed several tense months of debate on how an independent Scotland would deal with such diverse matters as defense, education, health care, and the economy. Several large banks, including The Royal Bank of Scotland, suggested that they would move their base of operations outside of Scotland should the vote go in favor of independence. The heightened rhetoric involved on both sides of the referendum question debate highlighted the tension between Scotland’s economic and cultural values.

Eventually, the independence referendum failed, with many voters and commentators alike suggesting that economic stability and the importance of being linked to the greater community of the European Union were far more important than the romantic cultural notions of a once again free Scottish state. The biggest reason behind the failure of the Scottish independence referendum was ambiguity. Too many questions about the future of the nation remained unanswered by the time the polls opened. Sometimes the best way to mediate ambiguity is to simply not rush into decisions but instead to stop, to pause, and to think. It was easier, perhaps, for some voters to stick with a union that had endured for over three hundred years than to try something else. In the end, the engaged pragmatism that

first emerged in the more moderate Calvinist movements of the early eighteenth century once again materialized as voters mulled the practical consequences associated with dissolving the Union.

Exquisite Clutter came about from a desire to examine the way that objects in adventures written by Scottish authors display this highly paradoxical conflict between economic and social/cultural values. As this project developed, I found myself fascinated by the fickleness of objects in these texts. Objects were increasingly difficult to pin down. The more I read, the more I saw objects giving their owners, beholders, and readers pleasure and pain alike. When examined within the context of Calvinistic materialism, objects are especially perplexing. The members of the elect are exhorted to sacrifice possessions on earth in order to secure treasures in heaven, both by scriptural teachings and in frequent speeches and sermons by political and spiritual leaders. But, simultaneously, they are encouraged in the ownership and tasteful display of comfortable objects in order to physically show God's munificence to others. Here, objects are a way to show both personal and spiritual status. Other tensions and anxieties began to emerge during my investigation, including the clash between the individual and his greater responsibilities to family, community, and nation. Ultimately, the best way to deal with the manifold possibilities of the object lies in moderation. Too many objects become a distractingly dizzying array of clutter, one that detracts from important tasks and relationships. For me, one of the biggest surprises of encountering so many different objects in the adventures that I surveyed for this project was the fact that almost none of the specific objects described by Stevenson, Conan Doyle, or Buchan in their works "spark joy" for the narrative heroes that encounter them.

Indeed, the object frequently provokes a troubling blend of fear, terror, and anxiety that distracts and temporarily overwhelms the hero in a moment that can only be overcome through the work of interiority. The idea of “exquisite clutter” within the post-1880 adventure suggests something that should be fled instead of embraced, or at the very least, seriously examined. Even if it is exquisite, the clutter of objects can be distracting, menacing, suffocating and perplexing, all at the same time.

In the hands of Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Buchan adventure began a serious transition, shifting from a genre focused on the pursuit of “personal advantage and reward [towards one that instead described and privileged] an explicit national agenda, service to king and country” (Kestner 175). I suggest that this development operates, in some ways, as an interesting modern experiment but one that also has its roots deeply entangled in Scottish heritage and culture. The “important and moral mission” (Cawelti 39) of the adventure is one with tremendous significance for the individual as it aids them in understanding their own place in the world but also in trying to interpret how the world (or, at least, their own interpretations of the world) has shifted. Stevenson’s heroes in *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped* are interested in bettering themselves and their stations, but, when David Balfour returns in *Catriona*, for instance, he has learned that he has an important role to fulfill in stabilizing relations between Highland and Lowland Scotland and the English authorities. Likewise, Conan Doyle’s heroes are regularly engaged in helping stabilize the country or in securing its treasures. Finally, Buchan’s Richard Hannay, who has already made his fortune, uses his boredom productively to thwart a variety of plots against the Empire.

By the time of Hannay's adventures, material rewards and their pursuit are no longer such an imperative part of the plot for a rollicking adventure. Instead, the development of interiority becomes the ultimate richly treasured prize. Calvinistic materialism may allow for the individual's own hard work, thrift, and creativity to be rewarded, but it also prizes the thought processes that go into assessing objects as signifiers and repositories of value for both ourselves and others. Interiority, concerns about material culture, and pragmatism all continue resonating in the works of later Scottish writers such as Helen MacInnes. MacInnes' popular spy thrillers are the strongest successors to the work of Stevenson, Conan Doyle, and Buchan. Her novels such as *Assignment in Brittany* and *Message from Málaga*, written over the course of a nearly forty-five year career, also frequently rely upon the tensions of reading and misreading objects and the anxieties of trying to navigate the intent of others, all while navigating one's own insecurities. William McIlvanney (especially *The Papers of Tony Veitch*) and Ian Rankin (*Knots and Crosses*), popular authors within the tartan noir mystery subgenre, continue this work in more contemporary times. The perplexing nexus of interiority, anxiety and fear, and the object as both repository of values and signifiers continues to be seen today in these works, as well as high energy comic book film adaptations (such as the *Iron Man* series) and action films featuring spycraft (especially 2012's *Skyfall*). The religious overtones of Calvinistic materialism may have evaporated in these more contemporary forms of the adventure but the basic tenets remain: the adventure hero can use objects to display their status as a capable steward of resources as long as they reject an overtly consumerist display of wealth in favor of the active pursuit of greater service to the community.

While recent scholarship in material culture studies and the Victorian novel has accelerated, these techniques have not yet been steadily applied to adventure. I chose to pursue this avenue of approach due to this absence, but more importantly, due to the endurance of the genre and its popularity with a socioeconomically diverse readership. The adventure, a steadily middlebrow genre, has never fallen out of complete favor with the mass market although it may have secured some critical disdain. Part of adventure's steady appeal is that it calls out to what is the best in us: the desire to engage with the world about us and, in the process, to learn more about ourselves. But in order to learn more about ourselves, we frequently find ourselves needing some sort of means of comparison, such as object/subject or even ourselves/Other. Looking at the adventure with the many tools that material culture studies has made available suggests that these texts are far more complicated than previously suspected. The tensions between moralism and materialism, for instance, that emerge when read through this lens are difficult ones to untangle for both the narrative hero and the reader.

Thinking more rigorously about objects, what they signify, and why they signify in the ways that they do can be both fruitful and exhausting. Objects are repositories of an almost endless array of values—monetary, cultural, moral, historical, spiritual, and sentimental— but they end up proving themselves ambiguous within the confines of the adventure. Again and again, they show up as materialist celebrations of wealth and success, aesthetic celebrations of one's own good taste, and as associated with a religious undercurrent, either as a display of personal religious values or as a marker of divine favor. They benignly function as keepsakes and memory prompts and malignantly as tools destructive to both

physical safety and that of the psyche. They “spark joy” but also can remind us of darker feelings. In the end, the baffling conundrum of the many objects that so generously populate the pages of the typical adventure remains elusive, imprecise, unclear, mysterious.

In pursuing this project I was far more interested in tracking what I saw as critical cultural and social interstices between these authors than in following a strict literary periodization. For both the adventure heroes that I surveyed in this project and their modern-day successors, the “exquisite clutter” that they frequently find themselves surrounded by is something that distracts attention from other issues involving more active community and political engagement, family and business responsibilities, and the complexities of navigating long-standing friendships or making new connections. I believe, however, that there is still some enrichment to be had in thinking more extensively about the object for both the narrative hero and the reader alike, especially as the thought processes involved in scrutinizing the many values that the object has to offer can be a refreshing physical, spiritual, and mental pause from the dangerous action that frequently permeates the genre. Examining the nuances of material culture in *Exquisite Clutter* can, I hope, offer a new approach to understanding the popularity of adventure. At the end, I remain haunted by the idea that objects matter, reminding us of what we do or don’t know about ourselves and about others.

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