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**Human and Beast: The Stapleton-Hound Dynamic in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's
*The Hound of the Baskervilles***

Master thesis

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Abstract

This MA thesis examines the intricate relationship between Stapleton and the hound in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Since the narrative has been approached mainly through Freudian theories, the interdependence between the antagonist and the animal has not been examined in equal depth. Addressing this gap, the study proposes a hybrid psychoanalytic-posthumanist framework to reconsider the Stapleton-hound dynamic as psychologically complex and paradoxical rather than merely symbolic.

Drawing on three concepts, Julia Kristeva's abjection, Heinz Kohut's alter ego, and Heholt and Edmundson's animal with-out, the thesis advances a threefold argument. First, the hound is interpreted as an abject projection of Stapleton's inner instability and concealed moral corruption; a figure that both embodies and externalises its owner's transgressive desires that are masked to maintain the coherence of his cultivated gentlemanly persona. Second, the hound functions as Stapleton's alter ego that symbolises the antagonist's internal psychological fragmentation and reveals how Stapleton and the hound reflect one another. Third, approached from a posthumanist perspective, the hound should not be reduced to a mere symbol or psychological extension of its master. Instead, it manifests as an autonomous, uncanny presence, an animal with-out that unsettles anthropocentric readings of the Stapleton-hound relationship and exposes the limitations of human self-knowledge.

By foregrounding the paradox of projection and resistance as well as dependence and alterity, the thesis challenges the embedded assumption that detective fiction ultimately restores epistemological order and neutralises fear. Although the crime is rationally solved, moral horror is not fully eliminated but rather displaced. Ultimately, the study argues that the novel questions such binaries as human/animal, tool/agent, and Self/Other by revealing them as porous and continually negotiated rather than fixed.

Keywords: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, detective fiction, Stapleton, hound, abject, alter ego, animal with-out, projection, moral corruption, boundary collapse, self-cohesion, fragmented psyche, Self, Other, human, animal, beast, uncanny, agency.

Anotacija

Šiame magistro darbe nagrinėjamas daugialypis Stapletono ir jo šuns santykis sero Arthuro Conano Doyle'io romane „Baskervilių šuo“. Kadangi šis pasakojimas dažniausiai buvo analizuojamas remiantis Freudo teorijomis, antagonisto ir skaliko tarpusavio ryšys iki šiol nebuvo pakankamai išsamiai ištirtas. Siekiant užpildyti šią spragą, darbe siūloma hibridinę psichoanalitinę-posthumanistinę teorinę prieigą taikanti analizė, leidžianti iš naujo įvertinti Stapletono ir šuns santykį kaip psichologiškai sudėtingą ir paradoksalų, o ne vien simbolinį.

Remiantis trimis sąvokomis, Julios Kristevos abjektu, Heinzo Kohuto alter ego ir Heholt bei Edmundson „animal with-out“, darbe plėtojamas trinaris argumentas. Pirma, skalikas interpretuojamas kaip abjektinė Stapletono vidinio nestabilumo ir slepiamos moralinės korupcijos projekcija; tai figūra, kuri kartu įkūnija ir išorina savo šeimininko transgresyvius troškimus, maskuojamus siekiant išlaikyti jo kruopščiai puoselėjamo džentelmeniško įvaizdžio vientisumą. Antra, skalikas funkcionuoja kaip Stapletono alter ego, simbolizuojantis antagonisto psichologinę fragmentaciją ir atskleidžiantis, kaip Stapletonas ir skalikas atspindi vienas kitą. Trečia, žvelgiant iš posthumanistinės perspektyvos, šis šuo neturėtų būti redukuojamas iki paprasto simbolio ar psichologinio savo šeimininko tęsinio. Priešingai, jis pasirodo kaip autonomiška, nejauki esatis — „animal with-out“, destabilizuojanti antropocentrinius Stapletono ir šuns santykio aiškinimus ir atskleidžianti žmogaus savęs pažinimo ribas.

Pabrėždamas projekcijos ir pasipriešinimo bei priklausomybės ir skirtingumo paradoksą, darbas kvestionuoja gana įsišaknijusią prielaidą, kad detektyvinė literatūra visada galiausiai atkuria epistemologinę tvarką ir neutralizuoja baimę. Nors romane nusikaltimas išsprendžiamas racionaliai, moralinis siaubas nėra visiškai panaikinamas — jis veikiau perkeliamas kitur. Galiausiai teigiama, kad romanas problematizuoja tokias binarines opozicijas kaip žmogus/gyvūnas, įrankis/subjektas ir Aš/Kitas, atskleisdamas jas kaip porėtas ir nuolat derinamas, o ne tvirtai apibrėžtas.

Raktažodžiai: seras Arthuras Conanas Doyle'is, *Baskervilių šuo*, detektyvinė literatūra, Stapletonas, šuo, skalikas, abjektas, alter ego, projekcija, moralinis sugedimas, ribų griūtis, savasties vientisumas, susiskaldžiusi psichika, Aš, Kitas, žmogus, gyvūnas, žvėris, nejauka, agentiškumas.

1. Introduction

“But now we have to prove the connection between the man and the beast.”

Holmes to Watson in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

(Doyle 1902: 173)

Sir Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle, born in 1859, Edinburgh, Scotland, may be regarded as a man of considerable versatility. Trained as a physician, he pursued a wide range of professional and personal interests, including literature, sports, and spiritualist thought (Wilson 2025, The Conan Doyle Estate Ltd. 2026). Nevertheless, he is most famous for being a successful writer as it is remarked that his literary talent was evident from an early age (The Conan Doyle Estate Ltd. 2026). As regards Doyle's career as an author, he is primarily cherished for expanding and popularising the genre of detective fiction (Rivera 2016) and most praised for creating Sherlock Holmes, the detective who is claimed to be “one of the most vivid and enduring characters in English fiction” (Wilson 2025). The Holmesian stories, which celebrate the use of reason, empirical observation, and deductive logic, were seen as a perfect reflection of Victorian attitudes towards science and rationality. Therefore, these stories received a lot of praise from the reading public (Metress 1994), which allowed Doyle to gain not only public recognition but also monetary wealth.

Nonetheless, the writer believed the popularity of his Holmesian stories overshadowed the recognition his historical fiction merited. A number of critics echoed Doyle's assessment of his detective fiction, viewing it as overly commercial and of lesser literary quality, while arguing that his other works deserved greater recognition (Metress 1994, Allan 2019, Wilson 2025). After Doyle's death, his reputation as an author went through a long period of academic neglect as the literary canon was not that welcoming to genre fiction. However, from the late 20th century onwards, scholars, assisted by genre theory, cultural studies, and historical contextualisation, began appreciating Doyle's detective fiction and praising it for its imaginative power and the effective style of storytelling (Metress 1994, Mazzeno 2023). Today contemporary criticism positions Doyle as a writer of significant influence whose fiction subtly reflects the anxious and rather prejudiced Victorian Anglocentric worldview of his time (McGregor 2011: 12, McNabb 2017, Ivanović 2023: 136, Mazzeno 2023), a worldview that his narratives simultaneously articulate and unsettle.

This MA study, specifically, focuses on one of Doyle's detective novels as its primary object of analysis: *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). It is one of the best-known Holmesian stories, widely regarded as a masterpiece of the genre and still popular across cultures to this day (Clausson 2005, McGregor 2011, Allan 2019, Enfield and Cregan-Reid 2025). The main events of the novel take place on and around the moor at Baskerville Hall, where the estate's owner meets a tragic death. Thus,

Holmes and Dr. Watson are called upon to protect the only heir of the deceased and investigate the mysterious circumstances of the death. Nonetheless, the case becomes further complicated by the local legend of a vicious spectral hound that haunts the Baskervilles. *The Hound*, as the title of the story is often shortened, may be seen as somewhat uncharacteristic regarding other Holmesian narratives since it is more focused on the eerie, mystic setting as well as the supernatural atmosphere rather than the art of deduction and the importance of logic (Enfield and Cregan-Reid 2025). The unexpected focus of the novel clearly positions it as a Gothic detective narrative.

As already mentioned, the story has received immense recognition and thus inspired research even in such fields as medicine (Phillips et al. 2001), media (Levet 2014), culture and art (Wang 2018) as well as film (Simonova Strout 2014) studies. However, as might be expected, there has been mainly literary research carried out regarding this canonical work. For instance, a number of literary academics have delved into the genre peculiarities of the narrative. Although it is sometimes claimed that “Gothic fiction and detective fiction are distinctly different in style and form” (Miranda 2017: 2), “The exploitation of Gothic elements in detective fiction was long regarded as a skillful way to create an atmosphere of suspense and mystery” (Ivanović 2023: 135). Thus, even though *The Hound* primarily belongs to the detective genre due to its logical explanation of the leading mystery (Stetska 2023: 88), it also actively embodies Gothic conventions, “often through the combination of horror and reasoning” (Miranda 2017: 2). This interplay challenges the assumed rigid opposition between the two genres (Clausson 2005: 63-65, Miranda 2017: 9, Vanhala 2022: 1-3, Ivanović 2023: 136). The story is rich with traditional Gothic tropes such as death, human duality, regression/degeneration, instability or even madness, the mystic and evil nonhuman creature, the moor and the damsel in distress. Nevertheless, the majority of these tropes may be frequently encountered in detective narratives as well. Furthermore, the literary stylistic techniques employed in *The Hound*, for example, suspense, symbolism, mystery, affect, and horror, are again common to both genres (Taylor-Ide 2005: 62-64, McGregor 2011, Allan 2019: 216, Miranda 2017: 9-10, Stetska 2023: 84-86, McLaughlin 2025). Therefore, it could be argued that the book’s tendency to play with the established dichotomies as concerns genre separateness are mirrored by its attention to and consequently, subversion of the differences between the Self and the Other (Taylor-Ide 2005: 62-63, Ivanović 2023: 141), something that will be elaborated on and investigated in the subsequent parts of the thesis.

Naturally, numerous scholars have also been interested in the analysis of *The Hound* through the psychoanalytic lens (Taylor-Ide 2005, Lesmana and Afriana 2019, Ivanović 2023, Telek 2023) as both the Gothic and the detective genres are strongly intertwined with the theory of psychoanalysis (Massé 2012). In this regard, Jack Stapleton, the antagonist of the story, has been treated as worthy of critical inquiry, even overshadowing Holmes. Literary scholarship has often examined the moral

duality underlying Stapleton's cultivated persona, his violent tendencies and the more in-depth explanations of the possible reasons behind them. Hence, this character, due to its multidimensionality, has been the subject of widely differing critical assessments. To exemplify, a quite prominent reading of Stapleton suggests that he is not merely a simple criminal but rather a figure of evolutionary regression; someone who exploits primitive fear and animal symbolism to reassert archaic power structures (Clausson 2005: 71, McNabb 2017: 755-757). Yet psychoanalytic-leaning literary scholars seem to disregard the theory of degeneration and consequently, the previously stated idea. Some of them hold that Stapleton's hunger for power is driven by the id part of his psyche that motivates him "to fulfil his bad desire" and "become a murderer to reach his goal" (Lesmana and Afriana 2019: n. pag.). The others position him as a kind of magician, a master of illusions who skillfully misleads other characters "to gain an advantage" for "financial purposes" (Ahmadi and Ahmadi 2018: 80). Against these readings, however, an alternative argument emerges, claiming that the character of the antagonist is much more complicated than it may seem at first glance. It is argued that Stapleton represents the complexity of human nature as he embodies the innate human tendency to fluctuate between different masks, serves as "a reminder of the transgressive manhood" (Simonova Strout 2014: 66) and symbolises the blurred boundaries "between the civilized 'self' and the barbaric 'other'" (Ivanović 2023: 135). The latter interpretation of Stapleton, specifically, is the one this thesis will work on expanding. Yet, within the broader critical context, the aforementioned literary-psychoanalytic arguments regarding the antagonist have primarily focused on Freudian concepts, while notably less, if any, attention has been given to other psychoanalytic theories that could produce a more innovative and holistic interpretation of the character.

Building upon the existing critical discourse surrounding this character, Stapleton, quite unexpectedly, is typically analysed as a figure isolated from others. This analytic angle may seem reductive given the intricate relationships he has/forms with other characters; for instance, his wife Beryl or his secret relative Sir Henry. Instead of working on closing this gap, some scholars have briefly touched upon the supposed Stapleton's doubles. For example, there is an unconventional reading, claiming that Stapleton and Selden, the latter being an escaped convict who is hiding on the moor, are one another's doubles or alter egos. This argument is solely based on the characters' criminal history, the similarity of their names, and the fact that they both know the setting of the moor intimately (Clausson 2005: 71). However, this idea seems overly simplistic and underdeveloped. Then, a bit more persuasive conceptualisation of Stapleton suggests that he is Holmes' evil double, which foregrounds the blurred boundaries of the negative and the positive forces (Ivanović 2023: 143) and thus emphasises the duality embedded in human nature. Nevertheless, there is another

presence in the novel, a nonhuman one, which is arguably far more closely entangled with Stapleton than the characters discussed earlier. This thesis believes that their relationship illuminates the never-ending struggle between the Self and the Other most richly and convincingly. Yet the parallel between Stapleton and his hound, specifically, remains underexplored in existing scholarship, even though the hound is one of the most important tropes in the novel (McGregor 2011). Admittedly, the hound has been vaguely compared to Selden as well for their features (“the sunken animal eyes” (Doyle 1902: 174) of Selden and “small, deep-set, cruel eyes” (Doyle 1902: 202) of the hound) and the fact they are both “savage and half-starved” (Doyle 1902: 222, Ivanović 2023: 75). The hound has been also associated with Holmes due to their liminal, ghostly positions in the narrative (Allan 2019: 216). Nonetheless, there remains a scarcity of thorough research as concerns the complex and paradoxical relationship between Stapleton and his hound.

Therefore, this MA thesis seeks to fill the (double) gap discussed in the previous paragraphs through an examination of the Stapleton-hound dynamic within a more versatile psychoanalytic and posthumanist framework. In particular, this study draws on Kristeva’s theory of abjection (1982), Kohut’s concept of the alter ego from his theory of self-psychology (1971, 1977, 1984), and Heholt and Edmundson’s conceptualisation of the animal with-out (2020), which are brought into dialogue in the theoretical framework. Firstly, this paper aims to demonstrate that the hound can be read as an abject extension of Stapleton, an externalisation of its owner’s instability and moral corruption. For the sake of this analysis, abjection is approached as both a moral transgression and a collapse of boundaries. In this light, the hound represents a monstrous entity that must be cast out in order for Stapleton to maintain the public image of an intellectual gentleman. He has to abject the hound since it symbolises his inner disequilibrium and immorality. Moreover, the hound stands for Stapleton’s repressed or rather masked desires for wealth and power as well as his proneness to violence and transgressive attitude towards social norms. This nonhuman presence highlights its owner’s liminal status and dual nature, blurring the lines between such binaries as gentleman/criminal and human/nonhuman.

Secondly, the hound can be seen as Stapleton’s alter ego: while Stapleton is described as thin, unathletic, impassive, and colourless (Doyle 1902: 101, 168), the hound is enormous, mighty, and evokes terror effortlessly (Doyle 1902: 202). Nonetheless, Stapleton is ultimately revealed as a cunning individual who hides his sinister motives behind the mask of innocence. Thus, the hound as a trope stands for Stapleton’s desire for power and high status. Additionally, the canine not only represents the antagonist’s inner psychological fragmentation but also reveals the way in which Stapleton and the hound complement and mirror one another. Stapleton seems harmless on the outside yet is corrupt on the inside whereas the hound’s appearance is threatening. As for its behavioural

profile, it is difficult to say since the hound is being constantly antagonised and imposed on by the characters in the novel. This imbalance makes the reader start pondering on the animal's agency, which leads us to the final conceptual pillar of the triad.

Hence, the hound could be perceived as an animal with-out: although, physically speaking, Stapleton is its master, the hound remains a separate, internally independent agent, an uncanny Other, symbolising posthumanist resistance. Despite the heavily intertwined relationship with its owner, the dog comes to signify something that exceeds human understanding. Quite paradoxically, the hound is an entity that Stapleton abjects and his alter ego only if one views it from the humancentric point of view. If discussed in a posthumanist light, the hound is an active force, a Self in itself and not an object against which people can measure themselves. It is capable of disturbing, challenging its supposed owner's sense of self-knowledge and putting emphasis on human liminality. The conceptual tension between the hound as both a projection of Stapleton's inner chaos and an independent agent is not a contradiction to be resolved but a paradox that this thesis explicitly acknowledges and interrogates. Overall, this study suggests that the hound can be simultaneously read as Stapleton's abject extension, alter ego, and also an animal with-out, which demonstrates that the Stapleton-hound interplay is multilayered and conflicting.

Moreover, by focusing on this paradoxical relationship, the thesis complicates the assumption that detective fiction must ultimately restore order by neutralising fear and chaos through rational explanation (Saunders 2019, Link 2023, Springer 2023). While Holmes's investigation does resolve the crime, the analysis shows that moral horror, experienced by the characters in the novel, and otherness are not eradicated but rather displaced as it manifests in the form of the hound. Additionally, the thesis problematises another embedded belief in literary analysis: the stability of the Self/Other binary (Elbow 1993, Romanovska 2024). Through the reading of Stapleton, this paper shows that identity is produced through acts of exclusion and expulsion, with the Other revealed as structurally internal rather than external, rendering the boundaries between gentleman/criminal and human/beast unstable and performative. Thus, it can be argued that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* invites the reader to be more attentive to unconventional forms of otherness that resist straightforward interpretation.

Finally, to outline the remaining body of this MA thesis, the subsequent section provides a more in-depth exploration of the three concepts; namely, the abject, the alter ego, and the animal with-out. It delineates the terms' limitations, examines their conceptual overlaps and assesses their relevance to the Stapleton–hound relationship. Then, the analysis part follows. It is divided into three sub-chapters, each devoted to one of the three concepts and its manifestation in the novel. Finally, the thesis ends with a concluding section, which reviews the arguments made as well as contemplates possible further research into the matter, followed by summaries in English and Lithuanian and the reference list.

2. Within the Blurry Boundaries of the Self and the Other: A Multi-Theoretical Approach

As discussed previously, the paradoxical and psychologically layered Stapleton-hound relationship is both deserving and in need of intricate, creative, and theoretically rich literary investigation. Hence, this section of the paper introduces the abject, the alter ego, and the animal with-out, the concepts that are employed as theoretical cornerstones in this study, in more detail. All these notions derive from three distinct yet thematically related theoretical frameworks spanning psychoanalytic and posthumanist thought. These concepts offer strong and convincing theoretical ground as regards the analysis of the interdependence between the antagonist and the canine. Thus, the succeeding paragraphs briefly introduce the authors of the aforementioned concepts, clarifying the scope and use of the source material.

Julia Kristeva has been described as a prominent voice in contemporary thought, with an intellectual presence that continues to influence various fields such as feminism, philosophy, psychoanalysis, and horror theory (Daniel 2020, Raine 2023). Kristeva's book-length essay *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) has been widely regarded as her most influential work, particularly for its formulation of the theory of abjection and its ground-breaking approach to subjectivity (Daniel 2020). Accordingly, this MA thesis primarily engages with the book's first chapter, "Approaching Abjection", for its comprehensive and relatively self-contained exposition of the theory, while consulting the remaining chapters for further illustrative examples when necessary.

Similarly concerned with selfhood and subjectivity, Heinz Kohut positions himself in relation to Freud through the "dwarf on the shoulders of the giant" metaphor (Quinn 1981) yet departs from Freudian drive theory by founding self psychology. This theory foregrounds the Self and its developmental needs rather than internal conflicts (McLean 2007). Developed across *The Analysis of the Self* (1971), *The Restoration of the Self* (1977), and *How Does Analysis Cure?* (1984), Kohut's theory, addressing concepts such as narcissism, empathy, mirroring, and idealisation, has proven to be particularly influential in the treatment of narcissistic and other personality disorders (Kohut 2009, Kohut 2013, Kohut 2014). This thesis, however, focuses specifically on the notion of the alter ego which is gradually formulated across the three aforementioned books.

Finally, attention turns to a more recent and thus innovative concept. It similarly engages with the Self/Other dichotomy and attends to the difficulty of achieving ultimate self-cohesion yet approaches these issues from a somewhat different, posthumanist angle. The term referred to is the animal with-out, coined by Ruth Heholt and Melissa Edmundson, contemporary literary scholars who work in the fields of the Gothic, posthumanist, animal, and supernatural studies, and described in the book they

edited titled *Gothic Animals: Uncanny Otherness and the Animal With-Out* (2020). The main theorising of the concept will come from the introductory chapter of the book written by the editors. Nevertheless, the remaining chapters written by different scholars in the field will also be referred to for broader exemplification whenever necessary.

Finally, the following sub-chapters delve into the terminology with greater detail and clearer focus, both foregrounding the relevance of the terms and acknowledging their conceptual limitations.

2.1. Ontological Unease: The Liminality of Abjection

“When I am beset by abjection, the twisted braid of affects and thoughts I call by such a name does not have, properly speaking, a definable *object*. <...> The object has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I” Kristeva (1982: 1) enigmatically observes. Yet, even though the object is “radically excluded” from the Self, rather paradoxically, “from its place of banishment, the object does not cease challenging its master” (Kristeva 1982: 2). These are one of the first sentences aimed at untangling the meaning of abjection in the introductory chapter of *Powers of Horror* <...>. From the outset, it is apparent that the concept is highly complex and resistant to precise definition. As Kristeva puts it, the object lures the Self towards the place where meaning breaks down and gets scattered as it does not respect borders, boundaries, order, or rules (1982: 2, 4). Vomit, tears, sperm, blood, sweat, urine, excrement, all types of waste and bodily fluids, even our desires, dreams, illusions, and delusions; all of this and much more is object (Kristeva 1982: 3, 35, 53, 70, 88, 127, 133). It is something that inevitably is, or at least was, part of a person, either physically, emotionally, or mentally. Moreover, abjection brings out the paradoxical nature of the human as one may feel the urge to escape all that is object (even though object-like entities may serve as safeguards (Kristeva 1982: 2)) and yet the one by whom the object exists tends to also experience a perverse enjoyment (or *jouissance* since Kristeva utilises Lacanian vocabulary), just as much painful as it is fascinating, in encountering abjection (Kristeva 1982: 8-10). This suggests that abjection thrives in liminal positions and challenges self-understanding of I, the Self, its supposed master. The object seems to be fundamentally separate from the Self, from everything that is known, familiar. Bafflingly, it eludes recognition as anything, yet it is not nothing (Kristeva 1982: 2). Abjection can be read as “a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness” (Kristeva evokes Freud’s famously puzzling concept of the uncanny (1919) that also deals with the gap between familiarity and unfamiliarity), “a weight of meaninglessness” that, ironically, has “nothing insignificant” about itself. It operates “on the edge of non-existence and hallucination” yet it feels very much real as it “crushes” and even “annihilates” (Kristeva 1982: 2) one’s self-congruity. Thus, ultimately, abjection is not so much important through what it is (or what it can be), but its significance lies in the affect that it is capable of putting onto the Self, highlighting the tension between the Self and the Other and reminding us that the boundaries

are slippery. Therefore, the threshold between what is pure, proper, morally “clean”, or right and what is impure, wrong, scary, or disgusting, what is the Self and what is the Other, get blurred (Kristeva 1982: 4, 85, 100, 108). The abject is both the cause and the result of such dissonance.

Building on the dichotomy of moral right and wrong, this thesis identifies another, among many possible, interpretation of abjection essential to the study. Abjection may be perceived not only as a collapse of boundaries, as the previous paragraph has suggested, but also as a phenomenon that can evoke moral horror and associations with transgression or evil (Kristeva 1982: 4, 53, 116). The abject, as previously mentioned, appears to disrupt rules and social order. To exemplify, all crimes could be treated as abject because they disrespect the law. And yet Kristeva makes a distinction between more abject-like and less abject-like crimes. A person who commits a crime which violates normativity or rules does not necessarily enact abjection by default if they are more concerned with being rebellious and protesting against social order as an act of self-liberation rather than committing evil. That is, they do not perceive themselves as committing a moral transgression since they do not regard adherence to rules as constitutive of moral behaviour. However, some crimes are inherently “immoral, sinister, scheming and shady”, for instance, “premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge”: “a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you...”, “the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior...” (Kristeva 1982: 4). To rephrase, crimes committed with a conscious awareness of their transgressive nature can be read as particularly potent figures of abjection. Rather than constituting a moral category in itself, such acts evoke moral horror and unsettle the rigid good/bad binary, exposing human vulnerability, moral fallibility, and the unsettling proximity between order and its collapse.

Having outlined two meanings of the abject relevant to the analysis, it is important to note that, as previously suggested, Kristeva herself acknowledges that her theory of abjection is inherently hard to define. She claims that “abjection is above all ambiguity” since it operates on the in-between principle and is rather unapproachable (Kristeva 1982: 4, 6, 9). Other scholars agree that the notion of abjection indeed escapes an all-embracing definition and remains somewhat paradoxical and elusive, maintaining its liminal position (Duschinsky 2013, Pedot 2013, Daniel 2020, Warmington et al. 2022). Thus, it seems that the abject may be described through its e-/affect more accurately than its essence as such. It can be approached, as the title of the introductory chapter of *Powers of Horror* <...> suggests, yet it cannot be defined definitively. This is one of the reasons why the abject as a concept remains complicated to rely on when performing literary analysis. Hence, a line of contemporary researchers argues for a recontextualisation of abjection. Some propose that the term is too incomplete theoretically, somewhat outdated, or even politically dangerous as concerns modern

contexts and the pure/impure dichotomy (Duschinsky 2013, Margiotta 2023). Kristeva does not try to defend her work in this regard as she admits that her “investigation into abjection, violence and horror... picks up on a certain vacuum” (Lechte and Margaroni 2004: 155). Some critics even suggest that Kristeva’s focus on the abjectful nature of the relationship between a mother and her child is too narrow, as it overlooks some of the more productive (social and political) investigations and examples of abjectful dynamics (Margiotta 2023). Yet, in spite of these limitations, the concept remains undoubtedly influential, intellectually acute, and fit for the analysis that deals with the duality and complexity of human nature, ethical breach, and destabilisation of identities.

2.2. At a Loss of Self-Coherence: When the Alter Ego Needs are Unmet

According to Kohut, a selfobject is not exactly an object in a traditional sense (a characteristic it shares with the abject) but rather a person that provides a stable, nurturing function as regards another person at the early stages of development; a function that helps maintain self-cohesion of the developing Self (Kohut 2009: 10, 41, 46, 97; Kohut 2014: 38, 91). A selfobject is firstly “experienced as part of the self” (Kohut 2009: 10) and later, if the development of the Self is healthy, the Self internalises the selfobject functions (Kohut 2009: 44, 125) and thus becomes able to operate autonomously (Kohut 2014: 227, 238-239). That is to say, the relationship between the Self and its selfobject is developmental (Kohut 2014: 18, 26) and at some stage of maturing, the co-dependency naturally disintegrates.

There are three types of necessary selfobject functions that Kohut highlights: mirroring, idealising, twinship, or, in other words, alter ego (throughout this thesis, both terms will be used interchangeably). Notably, the latter selfobject need was developed last as it was first introduced as a component of the mirroring function. Mirroring is essential for the Self to feel admired for their skills or accomplishments. This need is realised when the caregiver, whether it is a parent or any other figure of authority, celebrates the child’s progress, makes them feel paid attention to and validated and by doing that, nurtures the healthy development of the child’s self-esteem (Kohut 2009: 120, 132, Kohut 2013: 9-10). Then, idealising deals with the need to merge and get inspired by an idealised parent imago who is cohesive, responsive, and available. Later, if this selfobject need is fulfilled, the Self grows up to be more stable and goal-oriented (Kohut 2009: 14, Kohut 2013: 135, Kohut 2014: 274). Finally, the twinship/alter ego need is related to one’s desire to feel included and alike to a selfobject, which is unconsciously even stronger than one’s wish to establish independent identity (Kohut 2009: 95, Kohut 2013: 193). The alter ego experience could be seen as a less archaic form of idealising and a more archaic form of mirroring as it entails likeness without complete fusion and recognition of similarity alongside acknowledged separateness (Kohut 2009: 122, Togashi and Kottler 2012: 334-335). Nevertheless, even the mere presence of others can create “a sense of

belonging and participating” that cannot be reduced to either mirroring or idealisation (Kohut 2013: 200), which justifies the alter ego function being developed separately.

In alter ego relationships, the Self requires a selfobject that, “by conforming to the self’s appearance, opinions, and values[,] confirms the existence, the reality of the self” (Kohut and Wolf 1978: 421). Such relationships provide a sense of emotional resonance and shared experience, allowing individuals to feel real and continuous rather than isolated. While the alter ego needs may be somewhat met through enduring friendships or romantic relationships, it cannot permanently compensate for structural self-deficits as the inevitable recognition of separateness may lead to feelings of estrangement and the renewed search for replacement selfobjects (Kohut and Wolf 1978: 421-422). Hence, the alter ego hunger should not be understood as inherently pathological but as a variant of normal personality organisation, determined less by the intensity of the need than the specific location of the self-defect it seeks to repair (Kohut and Wolf 1978: 423). From this perspective, alter ego relations play a crucial role in the humanisation of the Self, counteracting experiences of alienation by situating the individual within a shared field of recognisable others (Togashi and Kottler 2012: 348-349). If the need for twinship is fulfilled, the Self develops the capacity to communicate feelings to romantic partners, form and maintain supportive relationships, and become part of certain groups or organisations (Kohut 2013: 198), which allows the Self to continue experiencing twinship with others on a more mature and less attached level.

However, if the need for belonging fails to be responded to, it may result in different kinds of fragmentation within the Self (Kohut 2009: 204-206, Kohut 2013: 199-201). For instance, the individual might experience feelings of loneliness, emptiness, and alienation. More specifically, the Self may face a lasting disturbance in the sense of being human (Kohut 2013: 200-201) as the essential need of feeling yourself “to be a human among humans” (Kohut 2013: 200) was not provided to them. As Kohut remarks while philosophising on Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* and his own professional practice, “Some of the most painful feelings to which man is exposed <...> relate to the sense of not being human” (2013: 200). Therefore, the Self, even after reaching adulthood, may continue to fantasise about alter ego relationships with others (Kohut 2009: 190, 198-199), whether it is a patient-therapist relationship (Kohut 2013: 197) or, more generally, a “near-delusional merging into others” (Kohut 2009: 96). By extension, the boundaries between the Self and the Other collapse within a person and the alter ego becomes an instrument of self-maintenance, not a subject in their own right. Thus, unfulfilled alter ego needs lead to a loss of self-coherence and self-sufficiency and, more broadly, to difficulty situating oneself within human experience and identity. Therefore, the concepts of abjection and the alter ego correlate with one another through shared themes of identity instability, boundary loss, and the collapse of Self/Other distinctions.

Admittedly, Kohut himself considers the alter ego function to be the most complex one (2013: 194). Therefore, as Kristeva's abjection, the concept of the alter ego is sometimes critiqued for its conceptual vagueness, insufficient theoretical development in comparison to mirroring and idealising, or even contradictory nature that calls for further clarification (Togashi and Kottler 2012: 333). Moreover, some scholars argue that Kohut's definition of twinship puts the disproportionate amount of blame on the external figures, encouraging self-pity rather than fostering internalised accountability for at least some of the behavioural challenges faced by the Self (Parrish 2012, Afek 2019). In spite of the acknowledged limitations, this thesis argues that the concept at hand remains relevant in the context of distorted sense of the Self which often results in unhealthy relationships with oneself and other entities.

2.3. When Human Dominance Breaks Down: The Category-Unsettling Force of the Animal With-Out

Finally, Heholt and Edmundson invite the reader to reexamine both the relationship between the human animal and animals of other species as well as the ontological significance of an animal itself. The concept of the animal with-out strays away from the anthropomorphic projection where animals are treated as allegorical examples of human moral failures and symbolic/metaphorical stand-ins for human behaviour or instincts (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 2-3). Traditional narratives tend to "scapegoat' the animal—making animals 'stand in' for cultural anxieties, fears, and abjected taboos" (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 9). Thus, the animal with-out challenges the concept of the animal within, a passive entity, a mirror against which human beings can measure their own self-understanding. This new theory sees the animal as radically exterior to the human, an irreducible external Other whose alterity resists incorporation into human epistemological frameworks (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 2-4, 9). *Gothic Animals* <...> shifts the readers' attention towards animals as active agents that are capable of disrupting human self-knowledge and challenging human tendency to categorise everything that is nonhuman according to human terms (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 4-5, 9). The mystery of nonhuman existence, the fact that "animals of all sorts have an entirely different and separate life to humans" (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 7) as they inhabit their own worlds within the world that we all share, and the human inability to fully make sense of animal life trouble human mind (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 4, 9). It produces epistemological disruption and, more broadly, challenges the anthropocentric hierarchy of life.

The concept of the animal with-out embodies the Gothic idea of the animal as the outsider, "entirely incomprehensible" (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 7) and unassimilated Other which evokes the sense of the uncanny (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 3). Just as Kristeva, Heholt and Edmundson also elaborate on Freud's contextualisation of the uncanny in their own way. The uncanny, if we distil the

meaning of the term, refers to a disturbing affect that arises when something previously familiar is experienced as strange, most notably when repressed infantile material returns or when surmounted animistic/magical beliefs appear to be confirmed in reality, producing a moment of uncertainty about what is real (Freud 1919: 220, 241, 247-249,). Heholt and Edmundson, however, reconstruct the term to stand for animal resistance to interpretation and the feeling of discomfort and incertitude when a human eye is met by the gaze of an animal. This encounter produces an uncanny effect, not because the animal is monstrous, but because its gaze exposes the limits of human perception and mastery, opening onto “countless worlds of perception which are forever closed to us” (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 7). Thus, animal presence challenges human assumptions about reality, human dominance, and the otherness of animals (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 6-9). Animals exist in relative spatial proximity to humans yet remain completely separate from the humankind, unknown and unknowable.

Drawing on Derrida’s phenomenological account of animal otherness in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008), Heholt and Edmundson point out that “non-human, uncanny creatures know things we do not, and they see us in a way that it is impossible for us to see ourselves” (2020: 7). Thus, the animal gaze functions as a site of epistemic disturbance. The scholars build on Derrida’s observation that the gaze of “the wholly other they call ‘animal’” (Derrida 2008: 11) is capable of confronting the human with an alterity that is “uninterpretable, unreadable, undecidable, abyssal and secret” (Derrida 2008: 12). The now-canonical scene of Derrida standing naked before his cat foregrounds the animal not as an object of human observation but as a subject that looks back, thereby exposing the human to shame, vulnerability, and self-estrangement: “caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, <...> I have trouble, yes, a bad time overcoming my embarrassment” (Derrida 2008: 3-4). This moment exemplifies the logic of the animal with-out: the animal gaze destabilises the presumed asymmetry between seeing and being seen and marks what Derrida calls “the abyssal limit of the human” (Derrida 2008: 12). Thus, the animal with-out converges on the animal as a source of uncanniness grounded in irreducible otherness rather than symbolic excess. The uncanniness of the animal mainly stems from the fact that it is too proximate to humankind yet fundamentally unknowable, resisting both anthropomorphic appropriation and philosophical abstraction.

The violence done to animals thus begins with their reduction to a single conceptual category, the animal in the general singular, which effaces difference and denies alterity (Derrida 2008: 40). The animal with-out hence insists on any animal’s capacity to observe, unsettle, and remain outside human regimes of meaning, thereby exposing the fragility of the human/nonhuman boundary. Developing this idea, Heholt and Edmundson theorise the animal with-out as radically opaque and suggest that “The Gothic and the animal must go hand-in-hand as the animal manifests the de- or non-human and refuses anthropocentric normalisation” (2020: 8). Accordingly, “Animals themselves have not

changed” and yet “the very definition of what they ‘are’” has “become unstable and open to question”. Rather, “it is the human that has changed in relation to the animal and, arguably, become less human, edging into the inhuman” (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 3), which only further complicate the human/nonhuman dichotomy.

The term itself is also complex for its refusal of clear-cut definition, which situates it within the same conceptually liminal ground with the abject and the alter ego. The animal with-out paradoxically signals both co-existence with humans (the “with” part) and the epistemological otherness from them as it highlights the fact that animals remain outside human understanding (the “with-out” and “out” parts) (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 7-9). Therefore, this concept not only embodies the paradoxical nature of the relationships between humans and nonhumans but also puts emphasis on the fact that animals are subjects in their own right. The animal modes of being and experiential worlds exceed and resist human epistemological frameworks, thereby unsettling anthropocentric assumptions of human mastery and interpretive control as well as ontological animal transparency. The animal with-out connects Gothic aesthetics (such as the uncanny, abjection, and horror) to contemporary animal studies and the posthumanist thought, seeing the animal as an ethical and epistemic challenge rather than a mere symbol of human imperfection. Additionally, the term also speaks on the human inability to fully comprehend nonhuman life and its inherent value. The animal with-out watches and unsettles human characters, prompting them to question the boundaries of the human as the animal gaze produces fear, fascination, and ethical questions. Therefore, despite the concept’s novelty in literary scholarship, it offers a strong theoretical foundation as regards the complexity of human-animal relationships and the way it destabilises human self-understanding.

Therefore, all three concepts, namely, the abject, the alter ego, and the animal with-out, complement each other in analysing the paradoxical Stapleton-hound interdependence. They emphasise liminality, highlight the push-and-pull tension between the Self and the Other, and deal with boundary collapse. Additionally, abjection and the animal with-out engage with the radical exteriority of the Other, while the alter ego addresses the merging between the Self and the Other. However, in this paper, the abject, more specifically, foregrounds the moral horror associated with Stapleton’s inner instability and monstrosity and the hound serves as an abject entity that must be cast out in order to keep Stapleton’s image coherent. The notion of twinship is primarily employed to showcase Stapleton’s psychological fragmentation; the hound can be read as its master’s alter ego that represents and indirectly mirrors the hidden parts and desires of Stapleton. Finally, the animal with-out is mainly used to investigate the posthumanist resistance that lies within the hound and the way it destabilises the sense of human mastery. Taken together, these concepts allow this thesis to argue that Stapleton’s authority depends precisely on his failure to fully separate himself from the animal Other he commands. This theoretical

framework thus shows how the novel figures interdependence as both enabling and threatening: the hound empowers Stapleton while simultaneously exposing his unstable and ethically compromised subjecthood.

So far, the goal of this chapter has been to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the three concepts at hand as they will be employed in the analysis of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* that is to follow. The thesis acknowledges, though, that the poetic space of the novel is much more expansive and cannot be contained within strict theoretical bounds. Hence, the paper draws on scholarship that aligns with the conceptual focus of the analysis rather than surveying criticism on the novel in its entirety.

3. Familiar Monsters and Shadowed Agencies: The Intricacy of the Stapleton-Hound Relationship

Previous scholarship has tended to examine Stapleton in isolation, minimising the importance of his relationships with other characters. This MA thesis, however, seeks to redirect attention to the complex bond he has with a nonhuman presence, the hound. Moving beyond solely Freudian theories, the analysis adopts a broader psychoanalytic and posthumanist framework grounded in Kristeva's abjection, Kohut's alter ego, and Heholt and Edmundson's animal with-out.

The analysis section is divided into three sub-chapters. The first one deals with the way Stapleton externalises his moral corruption onto the hound, rendering it an abject-like entity that must be cast out in order to maintain his social image of a well-wishing and intelligent gentleman. Thus, moral evil is repositioned instead of nullified. The second sub-chapter analyses the twinship between Stapleton and the hound. Particularly, it will investigate how the hound, as Stapleton's alter ego, embodies his masked desires for dominance as well as mirrors Stapleton's inner wickedness in its physical form. Finally, the third part of the analysis complicates these anthropocentric interpretations of the hound by embracing a posthumanist viewpoint. Precisely, it examines the hound as an independent agent, an unknowable Other that cannot be solely reduced to the projection of its owner's psyche.

3.1. Externalising the Inner: The Displaced Evil

"You would find him an interesting study" (Doyle 1902: 101): that is what, in one of his letters to Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson observes regarding Jack Stapleton. Indeed, the latter is a deeply complex personality who, however, in the beginning of the story "appears to be a very consistent character" (Doyle 1902: 192). Stapleton masterfully enacts the position of a respectable gentleman and a hospitable host (Doyle 1902: 187). He seems kind, modest, and always eager to give "some aid or advice" (Doyle 1902: 86) to those in need, especially, as concerns the mysterious case of Sir Charles Baskerville's death. It is not purely due to him being a concerned citizen; Stapleton is a loyal acquaintance and a kind-hearted person as well. His fellowship with the deceased was close and amiable as he was much concerned at the state of Sir Charles' health and general wellbeing even before the fatal accident occurred (Doyle 1902: 23). Additionally, Stapleton is caring not only towards his long-term friend but also the other inhabitants of the neighborhood, Mrs. Lyons, for example. It was on account of Stapleton's exceeding kindness, as described by the lady herself, that Sir Charles learned about her struggles; the passing of the information led to the old gentleman deciding to assist Mrs. Lyons financially (Doyle 1902: 149). All of these character traits Stapleton seems to possess make him appear innocent and good-hearted in the eyes of the public.

Moreover, Stapleton is not only a well-regarded member of the community but also a man of science: a naturalist, an entomologist. He is cool, unemotional and, as noticed by Dr. Watson, characterised by strong nerves (Doyle 1902: 88, 101). Even when the two men were discussing the strange, ill-omened sounds of the moor as well as the dangers it may bring if one is not careful enough, Stapleton remained sangfroid (Doyle 1902: 168). Dr. Watson's nerves, though, were shaken (Doyle 1902: 101), despite the fact that he had seen war atrocities firsthand. Maybe the reason for Stapleton's calmness when facing the unknown and the threatening of the moor is his intimate knowledge of it or maybe it is simply due to his logical, scientific character. Perhaps, however, there exists a different, more unnerving explanation as concerns his cold rationality. Nevertheless, Dr. Watson is not aware of it yet and simply regards Stapleton as a highly educated man (Doyle 1902: 89, 94) who refuses to credit any supernatural explanations and is not easily frightened. Stapleton gives the impression of an innocuous intellectual as he is often seen carrying around his butterfly net (Doyle 1902: 84, 114, 168) and is described as having "dapper shape and jaunty walk" (Doyle 1902: 176) and possessing "strong tastes for botany and zoology" (Doyle 1902: 94). His professional habits and curiosities imply that his interest lies purely in the realm of nature and science rather than in the trivialities of social gossip and interpersonal intrigue. He carries the air of childlike enthusiasm, naivety, innocence, and distractedness (Doyle 1902: 87, 91), which are the stereotypical character traits of a slightly reclusive entomologist. Since Victorian interest in insects was socially coded through ideals of disciplined observation and classification (Wale 2022), Stapleton appears to embody the merely observing and analytical scientist of his era perfectly.

Nevertheless, behind the socially performed persona of a courteous neighbour and a rational naturalist, Stapleton is a clever criminal (Doyle 1902: 179, 199) and the main antagonist of the story, capable of "refined, cold-blooded, deliberate" (Doyle 1902: 170) murder. Even after Stapleton's fatal disappearance in the moor, Holmes himself, who has had plenty of experience with villains of all kinds, admits that Dr. Watson and he have never "helped to hunt down a more dangerous man than he who is lying yonder" (Doyle 1902: 209). The antagonist's obsessive desire to gain the Baskerville inheritance and authority motivates him to commit horrific acts, including the successful murder of Sir Charles, who turns out to be his uncle, and the planned murder of Sir Henry, his own cousin. Nonetheless, the famous detective is sure that "Stapleton's career of crime has been by no means limited to this single Baskerville affair" (Doyle 1902: 217) and that "for years he has been a desperate and dangerous man" (Doyle 1902: 218). Stapleton repeatedly violates moral and social norms: he conceals his Baskerville identity, emotionally imprisons and physically abuses his sister, who, behind closed doors, is actually his wife (Doyle 1902: 96, 98, 101, 205, 216), manipulates his neighbours and other people he encounters, and finally, weaponises the hound he owns to enact his murderous

plan. It seems that this “desperate and defiant villain” (Doyle 1902: 204) is naturally drawn to transgression. Stapleton’s behavioural tendencies evoke abjection because they unsettle the boundaries that sustain social and moral order. Moreover, from a Kristevan perspective, his dreams of inheriting the Baskerville fortune can be interpreted through abjection as revealing the destabilisation of the Self (Kristeva 1982: 3, 35, 88, 127) that underlies his actions. Stapleton’s transgressions align with Kristeva’s account of “immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady” crimes. The planned murders of the other remaining Baskervilles fall under the category of a “premeditated crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge”. Stapleton, masked by the illusory innocence and friendliness, is actually an embodiment of “a hatred that smiles” and “a friend who stabs you”; he indeed is “the traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience” (Kristeva 1982: 4). Aware of the sinfulness of his plan, the antagonist exploits the hound to ensure that the crimes he has long devised cannot be traced back to him. Since Stapleton rationally recognises the evil of his desires and their threat to his well-ordered identity, his crimes can be read as evoking abjection. In Kristevan terms (1982: 4), such misdemeanors provoke a visceral sense of horror in observers and may also destabilise the perpetrator’s own sense of Self. This argument may partly explain the abject relationship between Stapleton and his hound, which is explored in the following paragraphs.

Even though Stapleton is seemingly attracted to what violates social laws and cultural norms, or, in Lacanian vocabulary, symbolic order, he is aware of its transgressive nature, which compels him to conceal his inner Self. That is how his carefully cultivated image of a moral and friendly citizen comes into play. It not only allows him to act out his malicious ideas, but also works as his safeguard from total repulsion, whether it would be experienced by others upon realising Stapleton’s true Self or by himself when forced to meet his inner world unconcealed. The abject brings out the paradoxical nature of a human being since a person may feel the need to escape all that is abject within themselves and yet may unconsciously experience perverse enjoyment in indulging in abject acts (Kristeva 1982: 2, 8-10). To illustrate, Stapleton, a skilled actor, was able to restrain his excitement when he thought his plan had worked and Sir Henry was dead. However, upon learning that the man who had met his demise was actually Seldon, an infamous criminal who was hiding from the law, he turned “a ghastly face” upon Holmes and Dr. Watson and was able to overcome “his amazement and his disappointment” only “by a supreme effort” (Doyle 1902: 176). His reaction suggests that while the prospect of a fruitful murder had produced a concealed thrill, the failure of the plan forced him to suppress that excitement and reassert self-control. Therefore, Stapleton’s abject psyche challenges his Self from within, compelling him both to indulge in transgression and seek ways of disposing of the moral burden it imposes on his identity.

Therefore, Stapleton employs the hound not only as the tool for the murders but also the bearer of the moral horror he would otherwise have to inevitably face. Namely, he casts out all that is abject within himself and places it onto the hound. The hound thus serves as the “real monster”, whereas Stapleton can enjoy the life of a respectable gentleman. He bought the brawniest and the most savage dog he could find and instrumentalised it, so it figures as an abject presence that condenses fear and allows the preservation of his image. The use of phosphor “to make the creature diabolical was a flash of genius upon his part” (Doyle 1902: 213) since the hound’s glowing body not only highlights its liminal position but also makes use of the trope of contamination. This reading interprets the hound as the site of abjection that evokes both fascination and disgust, awe and terror. In terms of Kristevan theory of abjection (1982: 4, 85, 100, 108), it embodies the tension between what is pure and impure, moral and immoral, “clean” and “dirty”, proper and wrong. The hound, as this thesis argues, becomes what Kristeva could be said to call a waste-body (1982: 108), a threat to Stapleton’s full psychic autonomy, something that he must evict from within and distance himself from before it betrays his sense of inner cleanliness. Thus, the threshold between what Stapleton associates with his Self and what the hound as the Other means to him gets unstable. Here is what Dr. Watson frightfully remarks upon seeing the hound for the first time:

A hound it was, an enormous coal-black hound, but not such a hound as mortal eyes have ever seen. Fire burst from its open mouth, its eyes glowed with a smouldering glare, its muzzle and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame. Never in the delirious dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish be conceived than that dark form and savage face which broke upon us out of the wall of fog (Doyle 1902: 201).

The text constructs the hound through the monstrous imagery by framing the animal as the ultimate source of evil and horror in the eyes of the observers. Hence, the hound can be treated as a materialisation of what has been physically expelled yet remains unsettlingly present.

Furthermore, the hound is repeatedly described in fiery, hellish terms. The canine is horrifying both in terms of its size and its association with superstition, ancestral curse, making it the visible bearer of abjection. It is described as something that a human mind, in its healthy consciousness, could never imagine anything more terrifying and loathsome. The thesis suggests that the hound manifests itself as “a massive and sudden emergence of uncanniness” as it seems to be “on the edge of non-existence and hallucination” (Kristeva 1982: 2), more like a production of a sick imagination or a nightmare than a real dog. Thus, the hound as an abject figure can be seen as staging the instability of Stapleton’s identity. The novel’s poetics, informed by Gothic conventions that foreground instability and the erosion of boundaries, further reinforce this dynamic. The animal is only unleashed, thus, “alive” at night and exists only within the limits of the mire, which positions it as a liminal being that blurs the boundaries between the physical world and the world of legends and superstitions. As the abject extension of Stapleton, the hound trespasses the boundaries between what is real and what seems like

a feverish dream; it exposes the tension between its owner's fragile sense of justified crime and the unacknowledged sense of moral burden. Consequently, the hound's abject existence seems to unsettle Stapleton's psychic stability, suggesting a gap between his self-image and his actions.

Since abjection thrives in states of uncertainty and liminality (Kristeva 1982: 2), the abject existence of the hound has the potential to destabilise its master's sense of Self. Stapleton never commits murder directly; instead, he uses the dog to enact his evil plan. He must hide the dog in the liminal space of the Grimpen Mire (Doyle 1902: 214), abjecting it not only emotionally from his psyche but also physically from his living space to preserve his self-image. And yet, his self-coherence directly depends on the continued externalisation of the monstrous onto the animal. The antagonist did not kill Sir Charles himself, he incited the hound to scare the man to death (Doyle 1902: 215), which allowed him to maintain emotional distance from the crime and as a result, his self-congruity. Stapleton employs the hound as a triggered extension of his will, an unintentional abject safeguard, a displacement mechanism that can be interpreted through abjection, allowing him to avoid confronting both the repercussions of his actions and his own moral corruption. Stapleton constructs his crimes in a way so "it would be hardly possible to bring home the guilt to the real murderer" (Doyle 1902: 213): catching the dog unleashed would not necessarily help the investigators "in putting a rope round the neck of its master" (Doyle 1902: 180). The fact that he does not take action directly allows him to delve into the delusion of fake innocence or even righteous cruelty. The hound materialises the violence Stapleton expels from his identity, creating a dynamic where the animal involuntarily carries the murderous impulse that Stapleton cannot openly embody and thus must disavow. Hence, this thesis argues that the manipulative utilisation of the dog creates a comforting yet precarious illusion of distance since Stapleton sees the hound as radically excluded from his own essence. Nevertheless, the sinfulness projected onto the hound is still part of Stapleton emotionally. The evil within himself that he tries to avoid is rather relocated onto the animal than fully exterminated, just like the abject that cannot be completely eradicated and can only be displaced (Kristeva 1982: 13-14, 203, 209). Even though the hound is seemingly expelled/abjected from its owner's subconscious mind, it comes back to haunt him. Thus, paradoxically, Stapleton's self-coherence depends on externalising his immorality onto the hound, yet this displacement is never complete since the hound, as a repressed abject entity, inevitably returns.

Nevertheless, Stapleton is haunted not only by the hound as the bearer of his moral transgressions but also by its howl. The "musical and yet menacing" (Doyle 1902: 171) cry of the hound functions not merely as a Gothic atmospheric detail but as an acoustic extension of Stapleton's will, operating in what Kristeva-inspired criticism terms the sonic abject, referring to a disturbing sound that unsettles the boundary between the Self and what it rejects, producing both fascination and repulsion (Erlmann

2019: 333-336, Woods 2026: 35-38). Dr. Watson recalls hearing “a long, low moan, indescribably sad, swept over the moor” (Doyle 1902: 89), a sound that seems detached from any stable source. Although the source must physically exist, it seems that the howl appears out of nowhere; yet, paradoxically, it is heard and even felt everywhere. The howl repeatedly precedes the hound’s appearance, operating on the in-between principle and creating a sense of uncanny by unsettling the boundaries between presence/absence, body/space. Thus, the image of a spectral hound which “fills the air with its howling” (Doyle 1902: 133) arises. The hound is heard without being seen (Doyle 1902: 89, 126, 171, 175, 180), just as abjection which, although seemingly expelled, can still be felt within.

The hound’s howl also dissolves the agent/instrument distinction: although produced by an animal, it is effectively the projection of Stapleton’s murderous design. This ambiguous status, both animal cry and human intention, places the sound within what Kristeva describes as the domain of the abject (1982: 2, 4, 6, 9), which emerges where meaning and stable boundaries begin to collapse. It is argued that sound itself often occupies such a liminal position, so that “instead of an object, sound’s place <...> resembles more that of what Julia Kristeva calls an abject” (Erlmann 2019: 333). The spectral howl becomes the medium through which Stapleton’s violence travels across the moor while remaining partially disowned. As discussions of abject sonics emphasise, sound can carry agency in a dispersed and ambiguous way; in this sense, the howl performs or rather warns about the upcoming crime acoustically before the body of the hound even appears. Abject sounds unsettle clear distinctions between intentional signal and involuntary, disturbing noise, revealing how sonic phenomena can externalise forces that subjects attempt to reject (Woods 2026: 31-32). Read in this light, the yowl of the hound is not only the evidence of its presence but the audible manifestation of Stapleton’s repressed violence, an abject echo of his will that circulates through the landscape even when his moral defilement remains unseen.

Furthermore, the hound, if treated as the abject materialisation of Stapleton’s moral degradation, is closely bound to secrecy: Stapleton hides his true identity, character, and intentions from others just as much as he hides the hound from connection with the world. The hidden lair in the Grimpen Mire which he keeps the dog in (Doyle 1902: 214) works not only as a place of physical confinement for the hound and consequently, the power it possesses, but also stands for metaphorical containment of the abject, an attempt to spatially isolate the manifestation of Stapleton’s moral corruption that he has projected onto the animal. Stapleton feels it necessary to keep the abject hound out of sight to preserve his self-coherence. He takes advantage of the old, frightening legend about the vicious ghostly hound said to haunt the Baskervilles (Doyle 1902: 209, 213) and partially turns it into reality, blurring the boundaries between natural/supernatural, rational/sensational. Ironically, by doing so, Stapleton,

himself a Baskerville, paves the way for his own death: the abject misuse of the hound and the calculated exploitation of the legend ultimately turn against him, exposing his scheme and driving him into the very moor he had weaponised. “Like most clever criminals, he may be too confident in his own cleverness” (Doyle 1902: 179): Stapleton fails to realise the danger his plan put him in. The abject element always returns to haunt its deject, the subject who expelled it (Kristeva 1982: 1-2, 8), thus the existence of the hound automatically endangers Stapleton’s identity.

“Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself”: Kristeva (1982: 1) uses the boomerang metaphor to describe how abjection behaves. Even if the Self attempts to reject something disturbing within itself, it persistently comes back as it cannot be permanently removed from the Self’s psychic world. The process of expulsion is continuous and never-ending because the abject, as a repressed but active entity, tends to resurface (Kristeva 1982: 3). Although Stapleton exploits the hound, misusing it to preserve his sense of respectability, the dog is still the most essential element of his murderous scheme. The existence of the hound ties Stapleton to the crime emotionally: he becomes, in Kristevan terms, beside himself as he is forced to acknowledge what he has done. The hound is neither fully external nor fully assimilable, mirroring how Stapleton’s identity hovers at the margins of civility. The abject essence of the hound highlights the push-and-pull dynamic between Stapleton and the animal: even though the villain expels his moral corruption and projects it onto the hound, the hound continues influencing its master’s life and ultimately, leads him to both exposure and downfall.

Therefore, the Stapleton-hound interdependence is ethically problematic since such distinctions as master/beast, familiar/unfamiliar, Self/Other become unclear. The mire, the marginal and Gothic kingdom of the hound, fatally swallows the antagonist (Doyle 1902: 208). “Stapleton’s body is never found on the moors as even nature rejects the sense of closure” (Simonova Strout 2014: 66): the abject resists containment and prevents the restoration of moral as well as narrative closure. This thesis proposes that the power of abjection mainly lies in its effect on the Self that struggles to separate itself from the abject entity. The hound disturbs Stapleton’s sense of stability and self-knowledge since it not only threatens to expose his depravity but also reminds him of the inescapability of one’s own moral perversion. Thus, moral evil is not eradicated but structurally preserved through projection and externalisation.

The Self, through unconscious assimilation, may internalise the Other as a necessary yet destabilising act to establish a subjective identity. In other words, the Self is partly built by taking in aspects of external entities. To have a stable sense of one’s own essence, it is necessary to be able to identify with or rather detach oneself from the characteristics of the Other. Nevertheless, this process is paradoxical because the qualities one takes in to become whole are not originally theirs. This internal

presence of the Other may result in inner conflict, loss of pure subjectivity, or psychic fragmentation. The Other becomes an alter ego within the Self and the sense of being possessed by an internalised Other enables the experience of abjection to emerge:

I experience abjection only if an Other has settled in place and stead of what will be 'me.' Not at all an other with whom I identify and incorporate, but an Other who precedes and possesses me, and through such possession causes me to be (Kristeva 1982: 9-10).

The abject thus becomes as a boundary produced through the subjects encounter with the alter ego, "simply a frontier, a repulsive gift that the Other, having become *alter ego*, drops so that "I" does not disappear in it but finds, in that sublime alienation, a forfeited existence" (Kristeva 1982: 9). In *The Hound*, Stapleton both projects his evil onto the hound and internalises its characteristics that he lacks, such as animalistic ferocity that contrasts with his outward appearance of civility. This paradoxical exchange indicates that the concepts of abjection and the alter ego are highly intertwined. The animal embodies the monstrous drives that Stapleton must expel to maintain his social identity, yet its very existence destabilises that identity by materialising the horror Stapleton attempts to repress. Therefore, the hound becomes both the abject extension of Stapleton's instability and moral decay and his alter ego, a split-off part of his subjectivity. Thus, the following sub-chapter explores the latter function of the hound within the Stapleton-hound dynamic.

3.2. When Suppressed Desires Take Form: Familiar yet Alien

While the previous sub-chapter examines Stapleton's public persona, the present section focuses on the descriptive patterns of his physical appearance. Stapleton is introduced as a:

<...> clean-shaven, prim-faced man, flaxen-haired and lean-jawed, between thirty and forty years of age, dressed in a gray suit and wearing a straw hat. A tin box for botanical specimens hung over his shoulder and he carried a green butterfly net in one of his hands (Doyle 1902: 84).

This description sets the tone for the other adjectives that add to his characterisation. For example, Stapleton is repeatedly described as small, slim, and unathletic (Doyle 1902: 84, 101); moreover, he appears to be neutral tinted or even colourless, having light, greyish features (Doyle 1902: 91, 168). All of these physical descriptors reinforce the antagonist's ordinariness and go hand-in-hand with his quiet, meek nature (Doyle 1902: 184-185). It seems that Stapleton is as grey as the moor; his innocent, even dull appearance puts him in a perfect position, making him a killer who would never be suspected. Due to his rather uninteresting physicality, he is able to camouflage himself and obscure his true identity, rendering his inner Self unseen, which allows him to scheme and, consequently, perform his murderous plan in silence.

However, Stapleton's real name is Sir Rodger Baskerville Jr. He is an undisclosed son of Sir Charles' late youngest brother (Doyle 1902: 185-186) and therefore, a cousin of Sir Henry, who was before known as the only heir to the inheritance. This paper argues that Stapleton, as he is still referred

throughout the paper for the sake of coherence, had his selfobject needs, those of the alter ego, specifically, unmet during the developmental stages of his Self. The twinship/alter ego needs deal with a person's craving to feel included and alike to other people (Kohut 2009: 95, Kohut 2013: 193). Stapleton's father, who fled to South America because of his infamous reputation, was thought to be a bachelor; yet he actually married and had the antagonist as his son (Doyle 1902: 30, 59, 212). Thus, Stapleton spent his life being a secret, alien to his kin and never experienced a sense of familial likeness, inclusion, or recognition in a broader sense (keeping in mind that his relationship with his parents was not discussed). His father, too, was "a black sheep of his family" (Doyle 1902: 30), thus presumably his alter ego needs were unfulfilled either.

Stapleton appears to have inherited not only his father's troubled character but also a sense of loneliness and alienation, as his value as a Baskerville was never affirmed. As a result, from the perspective of Kohut's self psychology (Kohut and Wolf 1978: 421), the reality of his Self was not acknowledged either. Such familial omission may lead to a structural deficiency within one's personality (Kohut 2009: 122, Kohut 2013: 7, Kohut 2014: 3, Togashi and Kottler 2012: 334-335). Namely, Stapleton's lack of self-cohesion may be due to the failure of his selfobjects, the relatives, to provide a necessary sense of emotional resonance and shared experience. Despite the fact that the twinship needs may be somewhat satisfied through other kinds of relationships, structural self-deficits cannot be fully compensated for by the newly formed alter ego resonances alone. It is mainly because of the inevitable realisation of separateness, which is deeply rooted in the Self's psyche, originating in childhood, when the twinship experience is most vital; it may cause feelings of alienation and a continual search for substitute selfobjects (Kohut and Wolf 1978: 421-422). Therefore, in terms of self psychology, Stapleton, as a structurally incomplete Self, is not capable of feeling real and continuous and is thus haunted by a sense of isolation as well as an unconscious desire to create alter ego bonds with others. Unfortunately, Stapleton seems to be able to form only emotionally unstable and destructive relationships (for instance, his abusive relationship with his wife or his manipulative behaviour towards Mrs. Lyons), which accordingly adds to his Self's deterioration.

If an essential need for likeness and belonging is not fulfilled, it may lead to different kinds of fragmentation within one's psyche (Kohut 2009: 204-206, Kohut 2013: 199-201). For example, a person may struggle with self-humanisation (Kohut and Wolf 1978: 421-422, Togashi and Kottler 2012: 348-349). In this sense, Stapleton's Self is disturbed by a constant experience of isolation and a primal need for feeling "to be a human among humans" (Kohut 2013: 200) because the experience of familial bonding is denied to him. As Kohut remarks (2013: 200), the feeling of not being human, at least not enough, is one of the most emotionally excruciating experiences a person can undergo. Thus, it leaves Stapleton's Self unstable and pushes him to the extremes of building self-worth by

trying to gain power and monetary wealth. For instance, an impulsive desire to prove his self-worth inadvertently exposes the instability of his Self and contradicts his image of a modest man when he boasts to Dr. Watson about the school he ran and the way he impressed the youth with his “character and ideals” (Doyle 1902: 94). This moment shows how the antagonist longs for praise, or at least recognition and appreciation, something that he lacked while his Self was at the formative phases.

Hence, Stapleton’s fragmented sense of self-cohesion calls for an alter ego relationship, while his hunger for aristocratic power and respect, which are heightened particularly due to not experiencing twinship with a selfobject, motivates him to seek success in immoral ways. For these two reasons he employs and exploits the hound, which becomes his alter ego. The psychological interdependence between Stapleton and the hound brings out the animalistic nature of the antagonist. However, as discussed in the beginning of this sub-chapter, Stapleton’s appearance is not threatening like the hound’s outward expression is. On the contrary, the man, despite his inner wickedness, looks completely benign. Dr. Watson once observes that Stapleton, due to his grey clothes and “jerky, zigzag, irregular” movement while chasing a butterfly, reminds him of a “huge moth” (Doyle 1902: 91). While moths are generally harmless, in folklore, they are sometimes viewed as messengers of ill will from the dead or symbols of death and misfortune. Globally, within moth mythology, they acquire a negative connotation and are thought to be evil twins of butterflies (Sedgwick 2020, Elverson 2022). Symbolically, moths and butterflies are also in a kind of alter ego dynamic, just like Stapleton and the hound. Although moths and butterflies are similar in terms of appearance, Stapleton gains a different kind of resemblance to his alter ego. He also mirrors the physicality of the hound; however, it happens not on the level of precise external similitude but through subtle mimicry of animality and harshness.

In addition, the moth trope may remind the reader of the legend of the Mothman. The Mothman is claimed to be a mysterious humanoid creature to actually exist; half human, half beast. It supposedly had huge wings and glowing, fiery red eyes and was responsible for the Silver Bridge collapse, which killed forty-six people (Sedgwick 2020). In terms of figurative language, the simile comparing Stapleton to a huge moth operates metaphorically, transferring insect-like qualities onto him, while simultaneously acquiring symbolic weight by underscoring his liminality and animality. Stapleton’s persona “undergoes a number of metamorphoses similar to the butterflies he collects” (Simonova Strout 2014: 64), reflecting the fluidity of his identity and his ability to assume multiple disguises. The antagonist, just like the Mothman, is also half human, half beast as concerns both his inner monstrosity and his concealed physical resemblance to the hound as well. The thesis believes that Stapleton unconsciously experiences, in Kohutian terms, a “near-delusional merging” (2009: 96) into the hound since, as previously discussed, his sense of being human is unstable. This merging

manifests in two ways. Firstly, it highlights the only physical characteristic that connects Stapleton to the hound. Secondly, it brings attention to the way Stapleton and the hound mirror, complement, or even compensate one another. Both of these cases of Stapleton-hound merging are unpacked in the following paragraphs.

Stapleton's gaze is described as incessant, questioning, and hard (Doyle 1902: 93, 178), making his small, fiery eyes the most revealing feature of his true Self. The "hidden fires" (Doyle 1902: 101, 174) and "the fiery soul" (Doyle 1902: 222) he possesses correlate with the fiery imagery that surrounds the hound. In the legend, the animal is said to have "hell-fire shooting from his mouth and eyes" (Doyle 1902: 133). When it comes to the actual dog, its eyes are revealed as "small, deep-set, cruel" (Doyle 1902: 202), glowing "with smouldering glare" (Doyle 1902: 201) and "ringed with fire", with its "huge jaws" seemingly "dripping with the bluish flame" (Doyle 1902: 202). This flaming portrayal of the hound not only aligns with the fiery description of Stapleton's personality but also exposes the fact that the hound, though a physical being, is continuously mystified, thus undermining its agency. More broadly, the imagery of fire can assume multiple functions in literary analysis. For example, Bachelard's relational analysis of fire highlights fire's paradoxical values, showing fire as both a purifying agent and a destructive force (Bachelard 1987, Zygulski 2022). Then, fire can be metaphorically recognised as knowledge, enlightenment (Pyne 2016), passion, or any other emotionally intense emotion (Charteris-Black 2017). Finally, fire symbolism is sometimes linked with judgment and moral dichotomy as it carries hellfire associations (Zygulski 2022, Starostenko 2025). The Stapleton-hound dynamic makes use of all these metaphors.

To exemplify, the fire within Stapleton's soul and eyes represents his destructive desires and inner violence, made visible in the hound; it serves as an abject leakage of the repressed, the link between the inner psyche and the externalised monster. Also, the "fiery" entanglement between the antagonist and the canine is paradoxical as it entails the complicated master-beast dynamic, which is dealt with in the subsequent sub-chapter. It is equally destructive, since both Stapleton and the hound end up meeting their demise, and empowering, as it allows the antagonist to enact his malicious scheme. Furthermore, the symbolism of fire in the eyes and glare of Stapleton and his alter ego becomes double-edged by allowing the reader to grasp the tension between deception and revelation. While the literature of detection traditionally promises enlightenment and resolution, the flaming light that metaphorically surrounds Stapleton ultimately exposes not rational clarity but the calculated artifice behind the spectral hound. The fire imagery also mirrors Stapleton's obsessive ambition and his almost feverish determination to secure the Baskerville estate, which metaphorically ignites the very terror, embodied by the hound, he unleashes. Finally, the hellfire connotations cast the so-called hellish hound (Doyle 1902: 201), often called the hellhound or the hound of hell (Doyle 1902: 15, 28,

128, 209), as an infernal instrument, “a manifestation of human aggression and violence” (Simonova Strout 2014: 64). As investigated in the first sub-chapter, the punitive force of the canine both externalises Stapleton’s corruption and situates the hound within an in-between position, emphasising the instrument/agent dichotomy.

Additionally, Stapleton and the hound share parallel modes of origin, both characterised by liminality. While Stapleton is a Baskerville legitimately, he has lived his life as a secret to his kinsmen. Such familial isolation, as previously discussed, resulted in the lack of opportunities for his Self to experience likeness with a selfobject. Hence, Stapleton’s position is marked by liminality, the in-between state: by blood, he is Baskerville, by performance, he is Stapleton. He is both and simultaneously, he is neither, at least not fully. The hound, being a mixed-breed dog, is also a liminal being: “It was not a pure bloodhound and it was not a pure mastiff; but it appeared to be a combination of the two” (Doyle 1902: 202). Both Stapleton and the hound are alienated in that neither is whole nor purely one. Their presence is marked by otherness as they do not belong to one category only, they cross boundaries. In a way, they are both hybrids as their essence is characterised by a part-this, part-that dichotomy. This shared hybridity and suspended belonging prepares the ground for understanding the hound not merely as Stapleton’s instrument but an externalised psychic counterpart as well.

The strict boundaries between Stapleton’s Self and its Other, the hound, collapse when the hound becomes an instrument of its owner’s self-maintenance, not a subject in its own right, which is further problematised in the following section. The animal embodies the socially illegible, masked aspects of Stapleton’s fractured identity, giving material form to violent ideas that cannot be accommodated within his performed persona. The dog thus serves as a bearer of Stapleton’s savagery and violence. Their parallel liminality enables the hound to function as Stapleton’s alter ego, a living manifestation of his divided Self that occupies the threshold between concealment and revelation, humanity and animality, control and unruliness. Since alter ego relationships entail close resemblance with strong yet incomplete fusion, an awareness of similarity that coexists with recognised distinctness (Kohut 2009: 122, Togashi and Kottler 2012: 334-335), Stapleton and the hound do not become one entity psychologically. Instead, they start coexisting as each other’s alter egos, mirrors, or counterparts.

Building on the narrative of Stapleton’s animality, there are a few passages in *The Hound* which reveal his true violent Self and guide the reader towards the discovery of the antagonist’s beast-like nature. Potentially the most illustrative one is when Stapleton catches his wife on a secret date with Sir Henry. Dr. Watson witnesses Stapleton breaking character and running wildly towards the couple. He was seen verbally abusing his opponent and his angry gestures (Doyle 1902: 114-115) sharply contrasted with the image he so carefully constructed. Stapleton’s wild, angry, and controlling nature

contradicts the innocent persona he pretends to be. Stapleton's wife Beryl is notably scared of him (Doyle 1902: 96, 98, 216) and despite his outward kindness, "He has certainly a very marked influence over her" (Doyle 1902: 101). Eventually she admits that her husband has been abusing her both physically and emotionally and comes to terms with the fact that he has never truly loved her; instead, she was "his dupe and his tool" (Doyle 1902: 205). Stapleton seems to be unable to form and maintain any healthy relationships and it may be due to his Self's structural imbalance. He takes advantage of his wife, just as he exploits the hound. His tyrannic role in both of these relationships highlights his brutality and psychic fragmentation, suggesting a failure to establish a sustaining alter ego bond grounded in recognition without annihilation. These hierarchical dynamics divulge Stapleton's dominating tendencies and position him as a menace, a threat, a beast in moral terms. In spite of his puny physical body, the "dry glitter in his eyes, and a firm set of his thin lips" indicate a "possibly a harsh nature" (Doyle 1902: 101) that turns out to be the outward trace of a wounded Self, prone to narcissistic rage when its fragile cohesion is threatened.

Kohut argues that the absence of an emotionally stable alter ego relationship may fracture the Self's integrity, which can manifest as intense narcissistic rage, severe depression, and, in extreme cases, madness or, more theoretically speaking, psychosis/severe personality disturbance (Kohut 1966, Kohut 1972). In *The Hound*, Stapleton, when full of anger, is indeed described as a madman or crazy (Doyle 1902: 116-118). When he saw Sir Henry courting his wife, he "was just white with rage, and those eyes of his were blazing with fury" (Doyle 1902: 17). This description not only supports the claim that Stapleton's aggression manifests in animalistic expression but also positions his Self as suffering from narcissistic rage. The way the antagonist regresses into emotionally chaotic, aggressive states whenever he is triggered suggests that his hidden bellicosity is structurally rooted in a fragile psychic organisation. Narcissistic rage is described as an implacable reaction that occurs when the Self's psychological equilibrium is endangered, often involving the wish to destroy the source of the injury (Kohut 1972: 379-381). The thesis suggests that Sir Henry's presence constitutes precisely such an injury to Stapleton's covert identification with the Baskerville line. It reminds Stapleton of what he lacked in his childhood, while Sir Henry had experienced familial recognition. Thus, Stapleton's oscillation between controlled civility and near-mad fury reflects structural instability: his rage signals the Self's struggle to prevent disintegration when its unmet alter ego needs are exposed. In Kohutian terms (1966: 253-256), Stapleton's Self fluctuates between the feelings of grandiosity and vulnerability, as he is "confident in his own cleverness" (Doyle 1902: 179) and yet the stability of his emotions can be easily disturbed. Hence, this reading argues that Stapleton is not that jealous of Sir Henry's attention to his wife but rather wounded by the threat his cousin poses to his Baskerville identification. Deprived of a sustaining alter ego bond grounded in mutual recognition,

he turns to the hound as a distorted substitute, an externalised double that is meant to enact his narcissistic rage and take revenge. Nevertheless, this alter ego dynamic ultimately fails to stabilise Stapleton's fragile Self and clears the path for his death.

Stapleton is not only vicious and unstable but also "wary and cunning to the last degree" (Doyle 1902: 174), which explains his predatory patience and ability to calculate the attack. His devilish slyness (Doyle 1902: 179, 180, 193) allows him to appear innocent while being able to exploit his alter ego with no suspicion. Even though the antagonist does not fit the stereotypical description of a robust and ruffianly criminal, "there was a lurking devil in his eyes" (Doyle 1902: 185), which hinted at his inner fragmented state. Through the character of the observant Dr. Watson, Doyle skillfully uses the literary technique of juxtaposition when unraveling the wiliness of Stapleton: "with his straw hat and his butterfly-net, I seemed to see something terrible—a creature of infinite patience and craft, with a smiling face and a murderous heart" (1902: 168). Nevertheless, even when Stapleton loses his temper and discloses the ferality of his character, he is able to quickly recover and find a way of rebuilding his near-flawless public façade (Doyle 1902: 118, 176). Thus, Stapleton's innocent look contrasts with his evil nature, which creates a pronounced duality of characterisation, foregrounding the tension between civilised appearance and savage essence. This disjunction further generates a sense of moral ambiguity and psychological complexity, positioning Stapleton as a figure of masked villainy. His outward respectability functions as a narrative misdirection, while his transgressive impulses are concealed and thrown onto his alter ego, the hound, which is forced to enact Stapleton's dark ambitions.

While Stapleton's inner drive seems to be far more potent than his body, the hound with its outward power functions as a mirror of its owner's inner ferocity. Therefore, the dog not only stands for the malfunction of Stapleton's moral compass but also symbolises the authority the man wishes to acquire. It operates as an instrumentalised alter ego presence, enacting terror on Stapleton's behalf while preserving the illusion of his detachment. In this sense, the dog fulfils the function of an externalised psychic support, for "the selfobject is experienced as part of the self" (Kohut 2009: 10), enabling Stapleton to disperse his agency across the human-animal boundary and sustain a divided yet interdependent identity. Thus, this reading positions Stapleton as a morally ambiguous, psychologically complex figure rather than a simple villain: the Self of the antagonist suffers from psychic fragmentation and continuous, though repressed, feelings of isolation and alienation, which manifest in the search for an alter ego bond. The hound in this dynamic does not merely assist Stapleton in his plan; it also completes his divided subject. This study suggests that Stapleton's fractured psyche is split into two parts: that of a gentleman and that of a nocturnal predator. The

hound, as the antagonist's alter ego, is forced to enact the latter part. Since Stapleton has to maintain his perfect social image, the hound is bound to do what Stapleton cannot by performing his evil plan.

3.3. Between Master and Beast: The Paradox of the Supposed Human Superiority

The preceding sub-sections focused on Stapleton's relationship with the hound primarily from a human-centred perspective, examining how the antagonist abjects and externalises his moral instability onto the hound and positions it as his alter ego, an entity that can execute his plan. The centre of analysis has been placed on Stapleton's moral failure and fragmented psyche, which may have explained the motivation behind the exploitation of the dog but still prioritises Stapleton as the primary locus of agency, leaving the hound conceptually secondary. Yet such a perspective overlooks how the hound operates as more than a passive instrument of its master's will. Thus, this final sub-chapter builds on the earlier, human-centred readings by introducing a posthumanist perspective.

Although, metaphorically speaking, the hound serves as the projection of Stapleton's fractured identity, it nevertheless occupies a physical position. The hound is abused by its master; starved, isolated, and controlled (Doyle 1902: 202, 208, 214-215, 222). The antagonist manipulates the dog to enact the murders by toying with its basic needs for food or freedom. Stapleton completely disregards the innate agency of the animal and treats it as an instrument whose sole purpose is to achieve his goals, a branched-off entity of his own psyche that is meant to implement his ideas. However, the dog exists beyond Stapleton's psychic projections: it has a material body and an autonomous identity that is, from posthumanist perspective, capable of "an entirely different and separate life to humans" (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 7). The hound exceeds its symbolic function as the bearer of Stapleton's moral burden as it has its own agential force. Animal existence, more generally, challenges the idea of an animal within, a mirror, a passive object that people can use to gauge how well they understand themselves (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 5, Walsh 2020: 26). Thus, basing its claims on Heholt and Edmundson (2020: 2-4, 9), the thesis reads the hound as an uncanny Other, an animal with-out, a body of radical alterity, an entity that cannot be understood in human terms because of its unpredictable ways of displaying active agency.

The howl of the hound has been discussed as a vocal extension of Stapleton's evil will. Contradictorily, it can be also seen as both a testimony of the dog's suffering and its way of taking up space metaphorically; even though it is physically confined, the dog can manifest its autonomy vocally. The hound's "terrible scream—a prolonged yell of horror and anguish" (Doyle 1902: 170) highlights its individual agency and positions it as an entity that is capable of suffering and feeling. While earlier readings risk reducing the hound to a detached tool, a projection, or a mirror of its master, the perspective of the animal with-out shifts the analysis towards recognising the hound as

an autonomous presence that exceeds such instrumental interpretations. Stapleton “could hide his hound, but he could not hush its voice” (Doyle 1902: 209), which was capable of travelling across the moor and announcing the dog’s existence. By allowing the animal to assert autonomy, the howl highlights the hound’s actuality and debunks the idea of the hound as a supernatural embodiment of horror or a mere tool without agency.

Furthermore, the hound’s voice works as a disruptive force as it complicates the boundaries between real and supernatural, human and animal; it challenges human knowledge regarding the world. Upon hearing the howl across the darkened moor, Dr. Watson and Sir Henry were deeply disturbed and the blood ran cold in their veins as the sound filled them with an uncanny and long-lasting sense of dread and uncertainty (Doyle 1902: 126-127). Interestingly, while the term “bark” typically refers to a mere sound produced by a dog, the notion of voice implies a more complex and personified vocal presence; in dog-centred discourse, the dog is often represented as possessing a distinctive voice through which its subjectivity is expressed (Leppänen 2015: 10, 15). Thus, the “otherness of the dog is <...> not completely tamed” (Leppänen 2015: 18) as it resists incorporation into human meaning-making and demonstrates that a human being cannot fully grasp the essence of animal life (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 2-4, 9). The characters in *The Hound* describe the howl as hideous, menacing (Doyle 1902: 171, 201), and “not pleasant to hear” (Doyle 1902: 209), however, they fail to acknowledge howling as normative canine behaviour. In this way, the howl ultimately functions as a reminder that the animal retains a form of agency and alterity that escapes human control and interpretation, remaining irreducibly outside the boundaries of human understanding. Paradoxically, the cries of the hound are interpreted as an omen of horror, though they actually serve as an auditory, instinctual, and communicative signal of the animal’s condition.

The hound’s agency is further evident in its physical strength and capacity for violence. Although trained and abused, the animal remains capable of unpredictable action that exceeds human control. The witnesses saw “the beast spring upon its victim, hurl him to the ground, and worry at his throat” (Doyle 1902: 201), foregrounding the animal’s corporeal force rather than the calculated scheme behind the attack. This brutality, which emerges from instinctual animality, however, differs significantly from Stapleton’s violence, which is rational and instrumental. The dog destabilises anthropocentric assumptions about human mastery and knowledge by displaying its exceptional and untamed force, setting it apart from other animals of its kind (Doyle 1902: 213). Stapleton’s need to conceal the animal in the Grimpen Mire and release it only under carefully orchestrated circumstances further reveals that the creature poses a potential threat even to its master, his social persona at least. Once unleashed, the dog appears as “a huge black creature, with its flaming jaws and blazing eyes, bounding after its victim” (Doyle 1902: 215), an image that underscores its unruly predatory drive.

Therefore, the hound cannot be reduced to a passive instrument of Stapleton's intention. Rather, it functions as a Gothic animal with-out: an uncanny, autonomous force whose behaviour remains only partially governable and whose violence suggests not merely the execution of Stapleton's ideas, but the eruption of a living creature compelled into brutality. By imposing danger not only on its victims but also its master, the hound ultimately emerges as an active agent that destabilises the hierarchy of human control and superiority upon which Stapleton's scheme depends. The hound is thus capable of generating terror and shaping the movement of other characters.

Nevertheless, the hound's subjectivity remains misunderstood and overlooked. The characters of the novel continuously demonise the hound by framing it as a "terrible creature" (Doyle 1902: 202) that is inherently evil, appalling, and hellish (Doyle 1902: 201). This thesis suggests that the hound, as an unknowable Other, evokes fear and a sense of uncanny in people, which explains their exaggerated contempt regarding the animal. Anthropocentric thinking places man at the top of the animal hierarchy by regarding humans as more evolved than the other species. Thus, the fact that animals cannot be fully analysed in human-centred terms both confuses and frustrates the human psyche (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 3, 4, 7, 9). Therefore, the hound's agency is minimised and antagonised: the dog is treated as more of a ghost, a phantom, an evil incarnate rather than a manipulated and abused animal (Doyle 1902: 104, 177). Such anthropocentric attitudes towards the dog not only reveal how animals were treated in the Victorian England (hinting at instrumentalisation and lack of rights) but also emphasise the importance of reconsidering, with the help of modern theoretical tools, canonical literature in terms of animal presence. In *The Hound*, the canine's innocence and autonomy are disregarded and instead its figure is perceived as a mere extension of Stapleton. For instance, after being told that Sir Henry survived the attack and the hound was shot dead, Stapleton's wife "gave a long sigh of satisfaction" and exclaimed "Thank God! Thank God!" (Doyle 1902: 205). Even though she was mainly relieved that her lover lived, her happiness revealed her complete indifference as regards the animal's welfare. Her reaction demonstrates the way in which the hound was seen as a mere instrument of Stapleton's plan instead of a life deserving of ethical consideration.

Additionally, the hound is repeatedly emphasised as savage (Doyle 1902: 201, 202, 208, 213, 222) and is even once named as Stapleton's "savage ally" (Doyle 1902: 208), which completely undermines its exploitation and involuntary participation in the evil scheme. It seems that animalistic qualities, especially those of a huge, strong, and agentive animal, create negative associations in the human mind; what is unknown is automatically savage. The dog is thus continuously mystified through the supernatural aura and the legend with which it is associated. Unfortunately, even Holmes and Dr. Watson do not consider the well-being of the animal. The idea of saving the hound from the

abusive owner does not cross their minds as they too do not feel any empathy towards it. They talk about the dog as if it is not worthy of freedom and is a monster that needs to be muzzled and chained (Doyle 1902: 183). Thus, in a way, Stapleton's plan partly succeeds: the hound, although innocent and exploited, still carries the burden of the crimes that only its owner is responsible for. This injustice may be due to the fact that the dog is radically exterior to all that is human; its size and unpredictable, instinctual power unsettles the human mind by symbolising all that is unknown and untamed. Therefore, the inconsideration of the dog works as a defense mechanism, a way of keeping distance from erratic otherness.

This distancing is reinforced by framing the hound as a demonic outsider (Doyle 1902: 28, 214), which reflects broader cultural anxieties about the human-animal boundaries, stemming from the early modern English narratives. Certain animals, particularly black dogs, frequently appeared in possession pamphlets as manifestations of "the Devil incarnate" or symbols of demonic influence. Similarly, demoniacs were often described as behaving "like a madd dogge," biting others during fits, which reinforced the association between animalistic behaviour and spiritual corruption (Walsh 2020: 22) and popularised the literary treatment of animals as animals within. Black dogs became prominently described as demonic figures because Christian theology positioned the animalistic as the opposite of rational, godly humanity, thereby casting animals as symbols of moral inversion and sin. Moreover, the black dog archetype was already widespread in folklore, where it was often regarded as a harbinger of death or misfortune (Walsh 2020: 25), making it an especially suitable embodiment of demonic presence.

Accordingly, the hound may be also read as evoking the werewolf, a liminal folklore being that cannot die since it carries a curse, acquired through inheritance, a bite/scratch, or a ritual). The hound occupies a ghostly, liminal position as it oscillates between its material body and the supernatural effect it produces. Just like werewolves or wolves in general, the hound is an outsider, the unknown and dangerous Other. While becoming a werewolf is usually involuntary and burdensome (George and Hughes 2019), the dog also carries the burden of Stapleton's evil, has to suffer from mistreatment and misunderstanding, and is forced to embody the horror of the legendary monstrous hound. Nonetheless, the agency of the animal brings the limits of human control to the surface, which unsettles human mastery. Therefore, as stated before, the hound is a Gothic animal with-out: this reading positions it as a representation "of cultural anxieties", a seemingly "supernatural force that threatens to disrupt social norms" (Walsh 2020: 26). In the human mind, the hound stands for the nightmare world, death, and decay (Doyle 1902: 125); however, it actually highlights the fragility of the supposed human superiority and complicates the subject/object dichotomy.

This destabilisation is reinforced by the hound's ontology, which is constructed through a sensory register that foregrounds nonhuman modes of being, particularly, smell and instinct. The hound's tracking ability is implicitly grounded in olfaction as Stapleton manipulates scent to direct its violence towards Sir Henry (Doyle 1902: 201, 203, 217). The nonhuman intensity the hound embodies, its speed, the ability to remain silent when needed, and physicality, overrides any sense of rational control, suggesting that its dangerousness emerges from an embodied responsiveness rather than rational mind. In this sense, the hound resists full instrumentalisation, inhabiting a liminal position between a tool and an independent force and even leaning towards the latter. Through these sensory modalities, the hound can be framed not only as a Gothic spectacle but as a disruptive, sensorial alterity whose being exposes the limits of human-centred understanding as regards animal life. The hound, whenever physically free, moves through the world primarily by means of its heightened senses that are inaccessible to humans; its instinctual impulses and animal ways of being ultimately go beyond and resist human systems of understanding.

The hound's resistance to human meaning-making is further supported by the Grimpen Mire, which serves as a Gothic, ecological space that nurtures the hound's otherness and agency that cannot be fully contained. It is not just an atmospheric backdrop that carries "an odour of decay" (Doyle 1902: 207) but rather an environment that shapes and complements animal subjectivity. "The shadows were thick upon the moor, and nothing moved upon its dreary face" (Doyle 1902: 171): this imagery produces stillness that seems to be paradoxical. The moor is both oppressed, its subdued silence suggesting a landscape instrumentalised by human schemes, reinforcing the idea that both nature and animals suffer from human domination, and oppressive, its darkness highlighting the intimidating and mysterious essence of all that is nonhuman. At the level of description, the personified face of the moor suggests a lifeless yet watchful presence. This eerie immobility heightens the impression that any movement, specifically that of the hound, belongs to a different, nonhuman order. The silent agency of the moor accompanies the silenced yet powerful subjectivity of the hound and underlines its uncanny separateness from the human world. Furthermore, the dense and white fog, which hung and drifted slowly in the direction of the characters, is also subtly personified as an encroaching, almost sentient force; its movement suggesting active participation in the scene rather than passive presence. Described as "banked <...> like a wall" (Doyle 1902: 198), the fog simultaneously obscures and encloses, disrupting human vision while privileging other sensory modes, particularly those aligned with the hound. Within this shifting, semi-animate landscape, human epistemology falters, as sight is rendered unreliable and the environment itself appears to conspire with the animal's instinctual logic. The "ill-omened moor was weighing heavily upon" (Doyle 1902: 197) the humans, emphasising itself as a safe space for animal otherness. The moor thus becomes a space of radical

exteriority, where the hound's nonhuman perception is not only enabled but amplified, positioning it firmly beyond the limits of human comprehension. It serves as a space where human control proves fragile and animal life operates beyond human mastery.

Ultimately, this analysis suggests that the hound occupies a liminal position as it is, paradoxically, all three: an abject projection of Stapleton's inner boundary breakdown, his alter ego, and an animal with-out. The Stapleton-hound dynamic in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* destabilises clear Self/Other, human/animal, and tool/agent boundaries by positioning the hound as an autonomous entity, capable of looking back at the human subject and exposing them to their vulnerabilities (Derrida 2008: 3-4). The reading of the hound shifts from Stapleton's psychological projection to his psychic double and finally to a posthumanist destabiliser of human meaning-making. The first sub-chapter of the analysis deals with expulsion and the way Stapleton abjects his moral instability and violent impulses by displacing it onto the hound, the second sub-chapter analyses the psychological fusion between Stapleton and the hound and the way the former manipulates the canine to mirror his own immorality, while the third part investigates the hound as a disruptive, independent force, which suggests that animal agency exceeds human control as well as challenges the supposed human superiority. Therefore, this thesis proposes that the Stapleton-hound relationship is highly paradoxical: even though the antagonist tries to position the hound as a beast and an evil incarnate, the hound's untamed agency complicates the matter by exposing its supposed master's moral decay and vulnerability. Stapleton's plan highly depends on the hound, framing the dog as the locus of agency, while Stapleton remains a beast in moral terms. The hound thus undoes the fantasy of human mastery that Stapleton attempts to perform through control. The thesis intends to demonstrate that animal existence is inherently dangerous and unstable only in anthropocentric worldview: actually, "it is the human that has changed" and "become less human, edging into the inhuman" (Heholt and Edmundson 2020: 3). In this light, foregrounding his immorality and cruelly calculative nature, Stapleton can be seen as not only the beast of the story but also a dehumanised subject, an inhuman. This claim complements the posthumanist idea of the animal with-out: while Stapleton can be read as an emotionally deprived, mentally severed being whose humanity is hollowed out, the hound, though instrumentalised, retains a residual form of agency that unsettles the very hierarchy Stapleton seeks to enforce. The hound does not simply challenge anthropocentrism; it exposes the instability of this viewpoint.

Given these findings, the conclusion that follows draws together the main points of the analysis, briefly discusses the limitations of this study, and outlines the final implications.

4. Conclusions

This MA thesis seeks to redirect attention to the relationship between Stapleton and the hound in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a bond frequently overlooked by scholars. Namely, by employing a diverse psychoanalytic and posthumanist framework, the analysis focuses on the Stapleton-hound dynamic as not merely symbolic but rather complex and paradoxical. The framework consists of the following concepts: Kristeva's abjection, Kohut's alter ego, and Heholt and Edmundson's animal with-out.

This reading proposes that the hound can be read as an abject extension of Stapleton's inner instability and moral corruption. Stapleton, aspiring to maintain his perfectly cultivated social image, abjects all that is immoral, boundary threatening within himself and projects it onto the hound. The hound thus stands for its owner's obsessive and violent desire to become the heir to the Baskerville inheritance, making the dog the bearer of the moral horror Stapleton would otherwise have to confront within himself if it were not externalised. In this sense, Stapleton attempts, rather unsuccessfully, to save his unstable sense of self-cohesion. The hound thus becomes his alter ego, a branched-off entity of the antagonist's subjectivity that is forcefully enabled to enact his crimes. The hound, in its frightening and mighty physicality, complements Stapleton's inner monstrosity. Nevertheless, by refusing to reduce the hound to a mere psychological projection or a mirror of its owner's fragmented psyche, the paper simultaneously suggests that the hound is also an active entity. It is an autonomous force whose agency can never be fully contained. Thus, the roles within the relationship become subverted: Stapleton, despite his attempt to position the dog as a supernatural vicious beast, becomes the beast of the story in moral terms, while the hound, in a way, could be understood as the master of the situation. The significance of the hound's presence lies not only in enabling Stapleton's scheme to become a concrete plan, but also in the threat the canine poses to his persona and self-cohesion. The hound is thus an animal with-out, a resistant subject that unsettles the supposed human superiority and challenges human self-integrity. Acknowledging the paradoxical nature of the hound's position within the relationship, the thesis emphasises that its goal is not to untangle the complex relationship in its entirety but rather pay homage to the multilayered depiction of human-nonhuman interdependence in the most popular Holmesian novel.

Moreover, the paper questions the presumption that detective fiction must inevitably restore epistemological order and neutralise fear by arguing that the genre quite often manages irrationality instead of fully overcoming it. The moral horror experienced by the characters of the novel is not fully eradicated but rather displaced onto the hound. That is, although the materiality and the exploitation of the hound is ultimately revealed, the hound, to an extent, remains mystified and its agency is downplayed by undermining the abuse it endured. This foregrounds the importance of

reconsidering animal agency even in canon literature. Additionally, the analysis also calls into question such dichotomies as Self/Other, human/nonhuman, and tool/agent: the figures of Stapleton and the hound demonstrate that these binaries are not fixed but rather fluid and prone to meaning-negotiation.

Admittedly, the thesis has its limitations. For example, it only focuses on *The Hound*, disregarding other Holmesian stories in which dogs also appear and assume different roles (such as the dog as a companion in *The sign of Four*, an assistant in *The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*, and a protector in *The Adventure of the Copper Beaches*). For a broader analytical scope, future studies on similar topics could also include other detective novels that have a dog presence, such as Agatha Christie's *Dumb Witness* or Wilkie Collins' *My Lady's Money*. Finally, further research might extend the analyses of Stapleton-hound dynamic through a more detailed engagement with ecocriticism, Actor-Network Theory, and animal studies.

Summary

This MA thesis examines the multifaceted bond between Stapleton and his hound in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. As the story has so far been analysed primarily through Freudian theories, the relationship between the antagonist and the animal has, overall, remained relatively underexplored. Seeking to address this gap, the study proposes a hybrid psychoanalytic–posthumanist theoretical framework that aims to demonstrate that the aforementioned relationship is not merely symbolic but rather psychologically intricate and paradoxical.

Drawing on three concepts, namely, Julia Kristeva's abject, Heinz Kohut's alter ego, and Heholt and Edmundson's animal with-out, the thesis advances three arguments. First, the hound may be interpreted as an abject projection of Stapleton's inner instability and immorality. It is a figure that embodies its owner's transgressive desires, which are masked in order to maintain the coherence of his gentlemanly persona. Second, the hound also functions as Stapleton's alter ego, symbolising the antagonist's internal psychological fragmentation and revealing how Stapleton and the animal reflect or complement one another. Although the hound's strength and the terror it brings emphasise its bestial nature, Stapleton, from a moral perspective, ultimately emerges as the "true" beast of the story. Thus, third, from a posthumanist perspective, the hound cannot be approached as a mere symbol or a psychological extension of its master. Rather, the animal emerges as an autonomous and ultimately unknowable being whose existence and individuality challenge anthropocentric interpretations of the Stapleton–hound relationship and expose the limits of human self-knowledge.

By foregrounding the paradoxes of psychological projection and internal resistance, as well as dependence and alterity within this relationship, the thesis reconsiders the assumption that detective fiction ultimately always restores epistemological order and neutralises fear. Although the crime in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is resolved rationally, the moral horror experienced by those who encountered evil is not entirely eliminated; rather, through Stapleton's actions, it materialises in the form of the hound. Finally, the study also observes that the novel itself may question the stability of such dichotomies as human/animal, Self/Other, and tool/agent, revealing them as porous instead of fixed.

Despite certain limitations, for instance, its focus on a single novel and only one human–dog relationship depicted within the Holmesian stories, the thesis ultimately aims to draw attention to the continuing relevance of the human–animal relationship and the importance of rethinking it even within canonical literature.

Santrauka

Šis magistro darbas nagrinėja daugialypę Stapletono ir jo šuns sąveiką sero Arthuro Conano Doyle'io romane „Baskervilių šuo“. Kadangi ši istorija iki šiol buvo analizuojama daugiausia remiantis Freudo teorijomis, antagonisto ir gyvūno ryšys, bendrai paėmus, liko gana mažai ištirtas. Siekdamas užpildyti šią spragą, šis tyrimas siūlo hibridinį psichoanalitinį-posthumanistinį teorinį modelį, kuris ieško būdų įrodyti, kad Stapletono ir šuns santykis yra ne tik simbolinis, o greičiau psichologiškai įmanrus ir paradoksalus.

Remdamasis trimis sąvokomis, Julios Kristevos abjektu, Heinzo Kohuto alter ego ir Heholt bei Edmundson animal with-out, šis darbas pateikia tris argumentus. Pirma, šuo gali būti interpretuojamas kaip abjektinė Stapletono vidinio nestabilumo ir nemoralumo projekcija. Tai figūra, kuri įkūnija savo šeimininko transgresyvius troškimus, kurie yra užmaskuoti siekiant išlaikyti jo džentelmeniškos asmenybės nuoseklumą. Antra, šuo veikia ir kaip Stapletono alter ego, kuris simbolizuoja antagonisto vidinį psichologinį susiskaidymą ir atskleidžia, kaip Stapletonas ir šuo atspindi ar papildo vienas kitą. Nors šuns jėga ir baugumas pabrėžia jo žvėrišką prigimtį, vis dėlto Stapletonas, žiūrint iš moralinės pusės, pasireiškia kaip „tikrasis“ istorijos žvėris. Taigi, trečia, žiūrint iš posthumanistinės perspektyvos, šuo negali būti nagrinėjamas tik kaip paprastas simbolis ar šeimininko psichologinis tęsinys. Šis gyvūnas pasireiškia kaip nepriklausoma, žmogui nesuprantama būtybė, kurios egzistavimas ir individualumas kvestionuoja antropocentrines Stapletono ir šuns santykių interpretacijas ir atskleidžia žmogaus savęs pažinimo ribotumą.

Išryškindamas psichologinės projekcijos ir vidinio pasipriešinimo bei priklausomybės ir kitoniškumo paradoksus minėtame santykiuje, šis darbas iš naujo permąsto prielaidą, kad detektyvinė literatūra galiausiai visada atkuria epistemologinę tvarką ir neutralizuoja baimę. Nors „Baskervilių šunyje“ nusikaltimas išsprendžiamas racionaliai, veikėjų, susidūrusių su blogiu, patiriamas moralinis siaubas nėra visiškai pašalinamas — jis, Stapletono pastangomis, materializuojasi šuns pavidalu. Tyrimas taip pat pastebi, jog romanas galimai pats abejoja tokių dichotomijų kaip žmogus/gyvūnas, savastis/kitas ir įrankis/subjektas tvirtumu ir atskleidžia jas kaip porėtas ir ginčytinas.

Nepaisant tam tikrų šio darbo trūkumų, pavyzdžiui, jo fokuso tik ties vienu specifiniu romanu ir tik vienu žmogaus-šuns santykiu vaizduojamu Šerloko Holmsio istorijose, šis darbas siekia atkreipti dėmesį į žmogaus-gyvūno santykio aktualumą ir svarbą tai permąstyti (net kanoninėje) literatūroje.

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