

# Figures of Speech found in the Sherlock Holmes Canon

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(page numbers are from the Doubleday Canon)

**ALLITERATION** — the repetition of similar sounds, especially in initial consonants in words next to or near one another. Alliteration is by far the most common figure in the Canon, often occurring three or four times per page and sometimes twice or more in a single sentence.

**W**orn **w**ith pain, and **w**weak from the prolonged hardships (STUD, 15)

“**H**e **h**as an extraordinary **f**aculty **f**or **f**igures” (GREE, 436)

“You would not call **m**e a **m**arrying **m**an, Watson?” (CHAS, 575)

“It will ring in my ears as **l**ong as I **l**ive” (SIXN, 586)

“which afford a **f**iner **f**ield **f**or inference” (GOLD, 612)

“this English life, with its **p**roprieties and its **p**rimness” (ABBE, 638)

never in the **d**elirious **d**ream of a **d**isordered brain (HOUN, 757)

“the **p**arcel had been **p**osted at a **p**ort” (CARD, 896)

**ANADIPOLOSIS** — repetition at the beginning of a phrase of a word (or words) with which the previous phrase ended

WILSON: “And then suddenly the whole business came to an end.”

HOLMES: “To an end?” (REDH, 182)

“the man who had wronged her—wronged her, perhaps, far more than we suspected” (MUSG, 396)

“I see those two faces staring at me—staring at me as they stared when my boat broke through the haze” (CARD, 901)

“No, no, don’t call it a pose. A pose is an artificial thing.” (LAST, 971)

## **ANAPHORA** — repetition of a word (or words) at the beginning of several successive verses, clauses, sentences or paragraphs

Sometimes he spent his day in the chemical laboratory, sometimes in the dissecting-rooms (STUD, 20)

He spoke on a quick succession of subjects—on miracle plays, on mediaeval pottery, on Stradivarius violins, on the Buddhism of Ceylon, and on the warships of the future (SIGN, 134)

“There is the French ambassador, there is the Russian, there is whoever might sell it to either of these, and there is Lord Holdhurst.” (NAVA, 457)

“You don’t know, Jack. [. . .] You don’t know this Baldwin. You don’t know McGinty and his Scowlers.” (VALL, 824)

“What do you know, pray, of Tapanuli fever? What do you know of the black Formosa corruption?” (DYIN, 934)

“She hated me, Mr. Holmes. She hated me with all the fervour of her tropical nature.” (THOR, 1066)

## **ANASTROPHE** — see **HYPERBATON**

## **ANTHIMERIA** — the substitution of one part of speech for another (turning a noun into a verb, for example). This trope is very common in Shakespeare, but very rare in the Sherlockian Saga.

“the peculiar appearance of his companion, however much he may have top-coated him, would give rise to gossip” (SIGN, 135)

the foliage which roofed us in (BLAC, 565)

he was so furred (VALL, 851)

outer guard and inner guard who close-tiled it (VALL, 856)

“when you doctored” (REDC, 907)

**ANTIMETABOLE** — repetition of words, in successive clauses, in reverse grammatical order. This is a form of chiasmus (“the criss-cross”), which is a reversal of any logical or grammatical element. Antimetabole applies specifically to the reversal of a single word pair. (Some rhetors say that antimetabole must involve antithesis.)

“He pays me well to do my duty, and my duty I’ll do.” (SIGN, 106)

“Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.” (SCAN, 163)

“He seems to have declared war on the King’s English as well as on the English king.” (LAST, 973)

“But this time my commission is to get the stone, not you.”

“But if I refuse?”

“Why, then—alas! —it must be you and not the stone.” (MAZA, 1018)

“He could not fly the country until he had realized his fortune and that fortune could only be realized by bringing off this coup” (SHOS, 1108)

**ANTITHESIS** — the presentation of sharply contrasting ideas, especially those juxtaposed in balanced or parallel phrases of grammatical structure. (This figure often includes homoioteleuton.)

The campaign brought honours and promotion to many, but for me it had nothing but misfortune and disaster. (STUD, 15)

“Stern facts here—no room for theories.” (SIGN, 113)

“one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult” (BOSC, 202)

WATSON: “I came to find a friend.”

HOLMES: “And I to find an enemy.” (TWIS, 232)

from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country (RESI, 423)

illustrious clients who crossed our humble threshold (BLAC, 559)

“For once you have fallen low. Let us see, in the future, how high you can rise.” (3STU, 607)

if, indeed, so dark a passion may be known under so bright a name (HOUN, 674)

**APOSIOPESES** — a sudden breaking off of a thought in the middle of a sentence, as though the speaker was unwilling or unable to continue. This does not include statements that are interrupted by another speaker or by some activity that suddenly intrudes upon the conversation. Almost by definition, aposiopesis must take place in spoken dialogue. However, in the last example given here (Was it

**possible—?) the dialogue takes place only in the mind of Sherlock Holmes.**

“It is true. And yet — ” (SCAN, 174)

“And if you can do so — !” (HOUN, 752)

“The man who tears a wedding ring off a dead man’s — ” (VALL, 797)

“But how the deuce — ?” he gasped. (MAZA, 1021)

Was it possible — ? (LION, 1089)

**ASSONANCE — the repetition of vowel sounds in adjacent or almost adjacent words. This is extremely common in the Canon and often occurs twenty or more times per page.**

“have you been doing with yourself” (STUD, 16)

“howling round the burning house” (SIGN, 146)

“the rascally lascar” (TWIS, 232)

An instant later steps crept down the passage (EMPT, 491)

shots had roused the household (CHAS, 581)

“numerous petty thefts” (BRUC, 913)

the black satin cravat to the lavender spats (ILLU, 985)

**ASYNDETON — the omission of conjunctions (such as “and” or “or”) from constructions in which they would normally be used**

“Diminutive footmarks, toes never fettered by boots, naked feet, stone-headed wooden mace, great agility, small poisoned darts.” (SIGN, 127)

“There is, of course, the other woman, the drink, the push, the blow, the bruise, the sympathetic sister” (IDEN, 191)

“The open window, the blood on the sill, the queer card, the marks of boots in the corner, the gun!” (VALL, 786)

“The torn bird, the pail of blood, the charred bones, all the mystery of that weird kitchen?” (WIST, 887)

the sudden swirl round of the wind, the blustering gale from the southwest, the dragging anchor, the lee shore (DEVI, 955)

“Violet de Merville, young, rich, beautiful, accomplished, a wonder-woman in every way.” (ILLU, 986)

**EPANALEPSIS** — repetition at the end of a clause of the word or words that occurred at the beginning of the clause. This produces a sort of “bookends” effect and highlights the word or phrase.

“I was amused by her society, and she could see that I was amused.” (NOBL, 292)  
“Children, my dear boy, children.” (GREE, 437)  
“Tobacco and my work, but now only tobacco” (GOLD, 615)  
“I didn’t think you would have taken advantage of it, Sir Henry—indeed I didn’t.” (HOUN, 728)  
“McGinty was the name—Bodymaster McGinty.” (VALL, 797)  
“Bleat, Watson—unmitigated bleat!” (REDC, 904)  
“Genius, my dear Von Bork—genius!” (LAST, 972)  
“I see no more than you, but I have trained myself to notice what I see.” (BLAN, 1000)  
“Everything would be seized—my stables, my horses—everything.” (SHOS, 1111)

**EPISTROPHE** — repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses

“with some trivial directions as to her rudder. There ain’t naught amiss with her rudder.” (SIGN, 136)  
HOLMES: “Your beer should be excellent if it is as good as your geese.”  
WINDIGATE: “My geese!” (BLUE, 251)  
HOLMES: “To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time.”  
INSPECTOR GREGORY: “The dog did nothing in the night-time.” (SILV, 347)  
“You hope to place me in the dock. I tell you that I will never stand in the dock. You hope to beat me. I tell you that you will never beat me.” (FINA, 473)  
“I suppose you might say she was handsome. Perhaps some would say she was very handsome.” (SECO, 662)  
“Is he here? Is Birdy Edwards here?”  
“Yes [. . .] Birdy Edwards is here.” (VALL, 863)  
“I can make or break—and it is usually break.” (THOR, 1061)

**EPIZEUXIS** — repetition of a word or words for emphasis, with no words intervening. This mode of speech is characteristic of Sherlock Holmes. All these examples of epizeuxis are spoken by Holmes.

“I’ve found it! I’ve found it!” (STUD, 17)  
“Pooh, pooh! Forgery.” (SCAN, 165)  
“Data! data! data!” (COPP, 322)  
“Halloa! halloa! halloa! what have we here?” (PRIO, 547)

“No, no, Lady Brackenstall—it is no use.” (ABBE, 645)  
“A beard! A beard! The man has a beard!” (HOUN, 745)  
“Cyanea!” I cried. “Cyanea!” (LION, 1093)

**HENDIADYS** — a figure of speech in which two words (usually nouns) connected by a conjunction (usually “and”) are used to express a single notion that would normally be expressed as an adjective and a noun

I could understand, as I saw the fury and the passion of the man [Jonathan Small], that it was no groundless or unnatural terror which had possessed Major Sholto when he first learned that the injured convict was upon his track. (SIGN, 144)

[The sense of this phrase is “furious passion.” This works much like Shakespeare’s phrase “sound and fury,” meaning “furious sound.”]

“let us make for Gelder & Co., of Stepney, the source and origin of the busts.” (SIXN, 588) [The sense of the underlined phrase is “original source.” The original Latin phrase is “fons et origo.” It is easy to see that, like ACD, Sherlock Holmes had received a good solid classical education.]

Riding slowly in this fashion they [Hugo Baskerville’s drunken companions] came at last upon the hounds. These, though known for their valour and their breed, were whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep dip or goyal, as we call it, upon the moor, some slinking away and some, with starting hackles and staring eyes, gazing down the narrow valley before them. (HOUN, 675)

[The sense of the underlined phrase is “the valour of their breed” or “their valourous breed.” This passage comes in the “origin of the Hound of the Baskervilles” section, which comes in a document purportedly written in 1742. Hendiadys would have been much more common in those times than when ACD actually wrote this novel, in 1901. The archaic trope seems very appropriate to the time the manuscript was supposed to have been written.]

**HOMOIOPROTERON** — similar beginnings in two or more adjacent (or nearly adjacent) words. This term is a neologism, coined by Richard Lanham at my behest in March 2005 and used here for the first time (most rhetors regard this as a form of alliteration). As noted below, oftentimes homoioproteron and homoioteleuton occur in the same phrase, in the same words.

It appeared to be omniscient and omnipotent (STUD, 62) [also homoioteleuton]

“when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth” (SIGN, 111) [also homoioteleuton]  
would wish to see our detectives more de-centralized (SIGN, 126)  
“They [The Baker Street Irregulars] can go everywhere, see everything, overhear everyone.” (SIGN, 127)  
“the most unsociable and unclubable men in town” (GREE, 436) [also homoioteleuton]  
“surrounded by unseen, unknown folk” (DANC, 514) [also homoioteleuton]  
He disliked and distrusted the sex (DYIN, 932) [also homoioteleuton]  
“but it was all forgiven and forgotten” (DEVI, 958) [also homoioteleuton]  
“the passionate, unconventional, unbusinesslike tone” (THOR, 1059)

## **HOMOIOTELEUTON — similar endings in two or more adjacent (or nearly adjacent) words, clauses or lines**

a comfortless, meaningless existence (STUD, 15-16)  
“he has behaved most kindly and honourably” (SIGN, 129)  
“under a bonnet on this planet” (SCAN, 168)  
“the connivance and assistance of his wife” (IDEN, 200)  
“the lowest and vilest alleys in London” (COPP, 323)  
“the wiser, better England” (NAVA, 457)  
“to marry a better if poorer man” (NORW, 503)  
“might as well live in Russia as in Vermis” (VALL, 844)  
“I don’t admit that a fresh illustration is an explanation.” (LADY, 942)

## **HYPERBATON — inversion of the natural or usual word order. One form of this is anastrophe, which is the reversal of adjective and noun (some rhetors regard anastrophe and hyperbaton as the same thing).**

This account of you we have from all quarters received. (SCAN, 163)  
Very long and very severe were the equinoctial gales that year. (FIVE, 229)  
“Out of the window he must apparently have gone” (TWIS, 235)  
“And very wet it seems to have made you” (NOBL, 295)  
“A hound it was” (HOUN, 724)  
“It’s with me you must come.” (VALL, 856)

**IRONY** — a rhetorical device in which there is a gap or incongruity between what a speaker or a writer says, and what is generally understood. This figure is very rare in the Sherlockian Canon.

“He [Dr. Grimesby Roylott] seems a very amiable person,” said Holmes, laughing. (SPEC, 265)

Am dining at Goldini’s Restaurant, Gloucester Road, Kensington. Please come at once and join me there. Bring with you a jemmy, a dark lantern, a chisel, and a revolver. S.H.

It was a nice equipment for a respectable citizen to carry through the dim, fog-draped streets. I stowed them all discreetly away in my overcoat (BRUC, 925)

**ISOCOLON** — parallelism not only of structure but of length (same number of syllables in the parallel phrases). A sort of intense parison.

The staves of the barrel and the wheels of the trolley (SIGN, 122)

“that world of fresh air and fair play” (MISS, 623)

I thought of the heavy rains and looked at the gaping roof (HOUN, 739)

“a great brain in London, and a dead man in Sussex” (VALL, 779)

“there is no fiend in hell like Juan Murillo, and no peace in life while his victims still cry for vengeance” (WIST, 885)

“For him the villain, for me the microbe.” (DYIN, 937)

**LITOTES** — a rhetorical device in which something is affirmed by stating the negative of its opposite.

In shape and size it was not unlike a cigarette-case. (SIGN, 118)

Male costume is nothing new to me (SCAN, 174-5)

“Young Openshaw shall not long remain unavenged.” (FIVE, 228)

he had emerged in no very sweet temper (COPP, 317)

“I was not sorry next day to leave Donnithorpe” (GLOR, 377)

“It happens not infrequently that I am sent for at strange hours” (GREE, 438)

“the Duke’s married life had not been a peaceful one” (PRIO, 540)

I glared at the intrusive vicar with no very friendly eyes (DEVI, 956)

**METAPHOR** — a figure in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thus making a

**comparison (but without the use of “like” or “as”, which is characteristic of simile)**

London, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained (STUD, 15)

“She is a sunbeam in my house” (BERY, 305)

I knew not what wild beast we were about to hunt down in the dark jungle of criminal London. (EMPT, 488)

“You have been walking for some months very near to the edge of a precipice.” (HOUN, 753)

Yet we added one more sheaf to our harvest before we left Woolwich Station. (BRUC, 924)

“She is a stray chicken in a world of foxes.” (LADY, 943)

Sam’s not a shark. He is a great big silly bull-headed gudgeon.” (MAZA, 1014)

“You can’t play with edged tools forever without cutting those dainty hands.” (3GAB, 1033)

“But you do occasionally find a carrion crow among the eagles.” (SHOS, 1108)

**METONYMY — the substitution of some attributive or suggestive word for what is meant (e.g., “crown” for royalty, “the cloth” for the clergy). Metonymy can also refer to the describing of something indirectly by referring to things around it. One form of metonymy is SYNECDOCHE, the substitution of a less inclusive for a more inclusive term to describe something (or the other way around). Most commonly, synecdoche involves the use of a part to represent the whole.**

“I depend upon them for my bread and cheese” (STUD, 24)

“not dared to show his nose” (SIXN, 589)

“To think that the same petticoats should come between two of my boys!” (VALL, 830)

“he knew more of the poop than the forecastle” (CARD, 899)

“Scotland Yard feels lonely without me” (LADY, 943)

**ONOMATOPOEIA — the use of words that imitate the sounds associated with the objects or actions they refer to**

there was a sharp click, the jangling of metal (STUD, 51)

The creature instantly broke into a succession of high, tremulous yelps (SIGN, 119) with a dull thud ran up upon the mud-bank (SIGN, 139)

“A groan of disappointment came up” (REDH, 180)

“The metallic clang heard by Miss Stoner” (SPEC, 273)

“It was the clank of the levers and the swish of the leaking cylinder.” (ENGR, 282)  
“there came from the window a sharp metallic snick” (NAVA, 461)  
from a dull murmur it swelled into a deep roar, and then sank back into a melancholy  
throbbing murmur once again. (HOUN, 708)  
A buzz of pleasure and welcome greeted him (VALL, 856)  
threw down the great book with a snarl of disappointment. (SUSS, 1034)

## **PARENTHESIS — a figure in which a word, phrase, or sentence is inserted as an aside in the middle of another sentence**

“Now, if this letter were loose—no, it *can* ’t be loose—but if it isn’t loose, where can it be?” (SECO, 659)  
“crushing the nut with the triphammer—an absurd extravagance of energy—but the nut is very effectually crushed” (VALL, 866)  
“news of the arrival of the packet—for her illness dated from that time—had such an effect upon her” (CARD, 897)  
I received a telegram from Holmes last Tuesday—he has never been known to write where a telegram would serve—in the following terms (DEVI, 955)  
“granting that I was too hard on Douglas—and, God knows, I am sorry for it!—what else could I do” (3GAB, 1033)  
“When I had sworn—as I did—that she should not be molested again” (THOR, 1061)  
“When I saw her—I happened on her unawares—she covered up quick” (VEIL, 1096)  
“the Haymarket Theatre—another of Dr. Watson’s bull’s-eyes—and ascertained” (RETI, 1120)

## **PARISON — a type of parallel construction. Parison is the fairly exact matching (comparison) of constructions, usually occurring in pairs or threes. (An exact form of parison is ISOCOLON, which see. Parison of three things is TRICOLON.)**

which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery (STUD, 15)  
“the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis” (SIGN, 90)  
“She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men.” (SCAN, 166)  
“I am commuting a felony, but it is just possible that I am saving a soul” (BLUE, 257)  
“She is swift in making up her mind and fearless in carrying out her resolutions.” (NOBL, 292)  
It was a lovely trip, the dainty green of the spring below, the virgin white of the winter above. (FINA, 477)  
“Exit the solicitor. Enter the tramp!” (NORW, 502)  
She was brown with the dust and draped with the cobwebs. (GOLD, 619)

the face in the cab, the figure against the moon (HOUN, 730) [also alliteration]  
He sat with his mouth full of toast and his eyes sparkling with mischief (VALL, 800)  
“could not bring one tinge of colour to those ivory cheeks or one gleam of emotion to those abstracted eyes.” (ILLU, 992)  
“A treacherous friend and a fickle wife.” (RETI, 1113)

**PERSONIFICATION** — a trope in which inanimate objects or abstractions are endowed with human qualities or abilities. This figure is very rare in the Canon and, when it appears, usually involves houses.

“The very rocks have ears and the trees eyes.” (STUD, 74)  
No. 131 was one of a row, all flat-chested, respectable, and most unromantic dwellings (SIXN, 585)  
The wind howled and screamed at the windows. (GOLD, 609)  
the fog-wreaths came crawling round both corners of the house (HOUN, 756) [also alliteration]  
a very long street of two-story brick houses, neat and prim (CARD, 891)  
more than once my revolver had been a good friend in need (THOR, 1068)

**PLOCE** — repetition of a word, within a sentence or phrase, with some change in meaning. A simple repetition of words is REPETITIO. But if, for example, the word changes its part of speech in the repeating, this is considered ploce. (The turning of one part of speech into another—verbing nouns, for instance—is called ANTHIMERIA, which see.)

“printed somewhat after the German fashion. Now, a real German invariably prints in the Latin character” (STUD, 33) [change in part of speech from adjective to noun]  
“the chosen of the Angel Moroni.”  
“[. . .] He appears to have chosen a fair crowd of ye.” (STUD, 57) [change in part of speech from noun to verb]  
“you will play for a higher stake to-night than you have ever done yet, and that the play will be even more exciting.” (REDH, 186) [verb to noun]  
“It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view” (BOSC, 204)  
“I began to laugh at this, but the laugh was struck from my lips.” (FIVE, 220) [verb to noun]  
“that he should succeed me in my business, but he was not of a business turn” (BERY, 304) [noun to adjective]

“You awake, Jack! [. . .] Why, I thought that nothing could awake you.” (YELL, 355)  
[adjective to verb]

“If I shot the man, he had his shot at me” (DANC, 524) [verb to noun]

“I thought little of it at the time, nor would have given it a second thought but for this letter” (VALL, 858) [verb to noun]

MERTON: “What’s up?” [. . .]

HOLMES: “[. . .] I should say it was *all up*.” (MAZA, 1019)

“Honest business men don’t conceal their place of business.” (3GAB, 1027) [adjective to noun]

“He is none other than ‘Killer’ Evans [. . .].”

“I fear I am none the wiser.” (3GAR, 1051)

## **POLYPTOTON — repetition of a word, within successive clauses or sentences, in a different form but from the same root.**

“It is not easy to express the inexpressible.” (STUD, 17)

farms were apportioned and allotted in proportion to the standing of each individual (STUD, 58)

“Women are naturally secretive, and they like to do their own secreting.” (SCAN, 171)  
the watchers were being watched and the trackers tracked (EMPT, 490)

“And it was of sealskin—and he was an old sealer.” (BLAC, 560)

“the indiscreet Sovereign will receive no punishment for his indiscretion” (SECO, 662)

“I find that a concentrated atmosphere helps a concentration of thought.” (HOUN, 684)

I had grieved with her grief in the dining room. (VALL, 799)

“I killed them quick, but they are killing slow” (CARD, 901)

## **POLYSYNDETON — the use of many conjunctions such as “and” and “or” within a sentence. The opposite of asyndeton. Very rare in the Canon.**

“Are they blood stains or mud stains, or rust stains or fruit stains, or what are they?” (STUD, 18) [also epistrophe]

“I keep a bull pup,” I said, “and I object to rows because my nerves are shaken, and I get up at all sorts of ungodly hours, and I am extremely lazy.” (STUD, 19)

“Eight weeks passed away like this, and I had written about Abbots and Archery and Armour and Architecture and Attica, and hoped with diligence that I might get on to the B’s before very long.” (REDH, 182)

**PRAETERITIO** — a rhetorical figure of speech in which the speaker or writer invokes a subject by denying that it should be invoked. This figure is typically used to distance the speaker from unfair claims, while still bringing them up (“I don’t even want to talk about allegations that my opponent is a tax evader”). The most common English construction of praeteritio is the phrase “not to mention.” Very rare in the Canon.

“to say nothing of half a dozen other people in the neighborhood” (SCAN, 168)

“not counting one in Brussels and one in San Remo” (STOC, 366)

“You will have barren work, to say nothing of incurring some danger.” (ILLU, 988)

I need not say that my eyes had hardly glanced over the paragraph before I had sprung into a hansom and was on my way to Baker Street (ILLU, 993)

**REPETITIO** — repetition of a word or words within a line or a sequence of clauses. This figure is extremely common in the Canon. If the repeated words fall into a pattern, they are a different figure. If initial words are repeated, the figure is *anaphora*. If final words, *epistrophe*. If words are “echoed” from one phrase to the next, the figure is *anadiplosis*. If the first word of a sentence is repeated at the end, this is epanalepsis. And, if the repeated word changes its meaning in some way in the repetition (for instance, changing parts of speech from a noun to a verb), the figure is termed ploce. (All of these figures have their own listings in this document.) But if there is no pattern to the repetition, the figure is simply termed **repetitio**.

they flitted from the gloom into the light and so back into the gloom once more (SIGN, 98)

“she was a free woman, but I could never again be a free man” (ABBE, 648)

“if I have told you nothing in the last three days, it is because there is nothing to tell” (SECO, 659)

“The one is whether any crime has been committed at all; the second is, what is the crime and how was it committed?” (HOUN, 684)

“It is, I admit, mere imagination; but how often is imagination the mother of truth?” (VALL, 802)

“A singular set of people, Watson—the man himself the most singular of them all.”  
(WIST, 882)

**RHETORICAL QUESTION** — a question to which no answer is expected, posed not for the purpose of eliciting an answer but for the purpose of asserting or denying something obliquely

“What is the use of having brains in our profession?” (STUD, 25)

“Why does fate play such tricks with poor, helpless worms?” (BOSC, 217)

How shall I ever forget that dreadful vigil? (SPEC, 271)

“Could there be a better hiding-place?” (ABBE, 646)

Why should these pages be stained by further crimes? (VALL, 853)

“Could I have believed that a gentleman would do such an act?” (3GAB, 1033)

**SIMILE** — a figure of speech in which two essentially unlike things are compared, usually in a phrase introduced by “like” or “as”

“You are as thin as a lath and as brown as a nut” (STUD, 16)

As the sun rose slowly above the eastern horizon, the caps of the great mountains lit up one after the other, like lamps at a festival (STUD, 71)

“See how that one little cloud floats like a pink feather from some gigantic flamingo.”  
(SIGN, 121)

the boy in buttons entered to announce Miss Mary Sutherland, while the lady herself loomed behind his small black figure like a full-sailed merchant-man behind a tiny pilot boat (IDEN, 192)

Folk who were in grief came to my wife like birds to a light-house. (TWIS, 230)

the breath of the passers-by blew out into smoke like so many pistol shots (BLUE, 251)

The sight of it was to me like a fire in a snowstorm. (GLOR, 381)

his face was all crinkled and puckered like a withered apple (CROO, 418)

“He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web” (FINA, 471)

“he will be fluttering in our net as helpless as one of his own butterflies” (HOUN, 750)

the beautiful broad moat as still and luminous as quicksilver (VALL, 787)

the man must have gone down like a pole-axed ox (REDC, 909)

“As to the Admiralty—it is buzzing like an overturned bee-hive.” (BRUC, 916)

“Well, sir,” said she in a voice like the wind from an iceberg. (ILLU, 991)

She entered with ungainly struggle like some huge awkward chicken, torn, squawking, out of its coop. (3GAB, 1025)

My mind is like a crowded box-room with packets of all sorts stowed away therein  
(LION, 1090)

**SYMPLOCE** — the combination of anaphora and epistrophe. An initial word or words is (are) repeated in successive phrases (anaphora). These phrases also include a repeated word or words at the end (epistrophe).

Knowledge of Literature—Nil.

Knowledge of Philosophy—Nil.

Knowledge of Astronomy—Nil.

(STUD, 21)

“You will ruin no more lives as you have ruined mine. You will wring no more hearts as you wrung mine.” (CHAS, 580) [also polyptoton]

“You won’t fail me. You never did fail me.” (DYIN, 936)

“You yacht against them, you hunt with them” (LAST, 971)

“She dotes upon him; she is obsessed by him.” (ILLU, 986)

WATSON: “It can still be done.”

HOLMES: “It has been done.” (RETI, 1116)

**ZEUGMA**—a construction in which a word governs two or more other words but has a different meaning when applied to each of the words. Very rare in the Canon.

alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition (SCAN, 161) [also repetitio]

All afternoon and late into the evening he sat lost in tobacco and thought. (HOUN, 696)

“Dr. Ernest, an unmarried man, played chess with Amberley, and probably played the fool with his wife.” (RETI, 1116)