

**Genre and Gender in 21st Century Visions of Sherlock Holmes**

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## **Dedication**

**To Jeff and Elsie, with all my love and appreciation**

**Abstract:** Sherlock Holmes has been one of the most-adapted characters in literature since his first appearance in *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887. Each new adaptation must offer innovations that bring freshness and contemporary appeal to time-worn stories and concepts or risk irrelevancy; analyzing these changes closely sheds light on shifts in societal constructs. Taking this as a starting point, this thesis examines *Sherlock* and *Elementary* from a perspective of feminism and queer theory via methods of discourse and genre analyses, with texts ranging from 1931 to the present as objects of comparison. The research illuminates constructions of masculinity as they have changed over time, particularly the movement from an orderly, stable, rational construction of hegemonic masculinity to one that is disordered, often violent, and anti-heroic in at least some aspects while still being invested in the status quo.

**Keywords:** Sherlock Holmes, adaptations, masculinity, television, genre

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## Chapter One – Introduction: The Game is Afoot

Sherlock Holmes has been one of the most-adapted characters in literature since his first appearance in *A Study in Scarlet* in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887. Even after more than a century of iterations of Holmes, interest in the character remains strong, as demonstrated by several recent high-profile, big-budget adaptations: Guy Ritchie's movies *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' BBC television series *Sherlock* (2010 and 2012 with a third series pending), and Robert Doherty's CBS television series *Elementary* (2012 ongoing at the time of this writing). As Ashley Polasek notes, "A property that is as frequently adapted and as culturally embedded as Sherlock Holmes is always in danger of creative entropy." Each new adaptation must offer innovations in addition to the standard elements that mark something as "Sherlock Holmes", or risk boredom and irrelevancy (2013, p. 284). These changes bring freshness and contemporary appeal to time-worn stories and concepts. Guy Ritchie's movies, for example, make Sherlock a Victorian action hero, while Moffat and Gatiss' series brings Sherlock into the modern world of texts and blogs. The biggest change is perhaps in Doherty's new series, which features a change of venue to New York City and a change of gender in Dr. Joan Watson, played by Lucy Liu. By looking at these changes in adaptations over time, and by looking at what remains constant, we can shed light on how societal constructs -- particularly constructions of masculinity -- changed over time as well.

In the course of my research, I found that films and television programs of Sherlock Holmes have gone beyond adaptation to comprise their own subgenre of the detective genre. With this assumption as a starting point, this thesis examines *Sherlock*

and *Elementary* from a perspective of feminism and queer theory via discourse analysis, specifically in terms of how generic changes illuminate discourses of masculinity that circulate in early 21st century popular culture, particularly the movement from an orderly, stable, rational construction of hegemonic masculinity to one that is disorderly, often violent, and anti-heroic in at least some aspects while still being invested in the status quo.

The study deals with new texts via a combination of methods that have not been attempted together in the Holmes field to my knowledge. *Elementary* (still ongoing) has just finished its second season at the time of this writing and is new enough that very little has been published on it as yet. A bit more work has been done on *Sherlock* but that program is also still relatively new (and new episodes are still ongoing); none of the studies released so far use genre studies as a framing methodology, particularly not in concert with feminism, queer theory and theories of gender. I believe that the insights uncovered by the intersections of these approaches offer a particular richness in terms of how gender issues play out in popular culture.

I was drawn to this question initially by my enjoyment of the BBC's *Sherlock* despite an earlier lack of interest in the Holmes oeuvre. My previous graduate work at Indiana University – Bloomington was focused primarily on Gothic and other Victorian literature, particularly early speculative fiction and texts that engaged with feminist and queer issues, which meant that I had a passing acquaintance with Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes stories but my familiarity with them was far from encyclopedic. The stories always struck me as insufficiently focused on character development and rather dashed off; I respected the taste of the many people who found them fascinating but they never



caught my imagination. As I began thinking about undertaking a second Master's degree in Popular Culture, however, I identified a strong interest in adaptations and also began to watch *Sherlock*. It seemed to me that issues of emotion and character development were primary in this adaptation, unlike the Doyle stories that failed to capture me, and I was curious about how this modernized adaptation compared to the plethora of earlier Holmes iterations. I enjoyed the series' playful attitude toward the characters' sexuality and the centrality of the Holmes/Watson relationship; I wanted to explore the gender dynamics inherent in that relationship's prominence and to try to pull apart what the series was saying about constructions of masculinity. I thought that the series evidenced an ambiguity about traditional gender roles. On the one hand, it seemed comfortable with at least acknowledging the homoeroticism lurking beneath the canon with two male characters with an unusually close and emotionally fraught relationship, but at the same time, the level of violence and even cruelty in the series seemed to be trying to shore up hegemonic constructions of masculinity. I wondered how much of this was typical of Holmes adaptations and how much was innovation, which led me to propose this project as the subject of the thesis required to complete a Master's degree in Popular Culture at Brock University.

### **Methodology**

Research on Holmes adaptations proceeds from an embarrassment of riches. Given the multiplicity of Holmes adaptations in media of all sorts, the crucial task is narrowing the field to something manageable for analysis. I have chosen to focus mostly on television programs, for the purpose of comparing like objects, although two films from the 1930s are included to establish early conventions. This is not strictly comparing

apples to apples, I realize, but to remove those texts from the analysis would omit some important early context and points of comparison. The considered texts consist of *The Sleeping Cardinal* (film, 1931), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (film, 1939), *Sherlock Holmes* (television program, second series only, 1968), *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (television program, first series only, 1986), *Sherlock* (television program, first and second series only, 2010), *Elementary* (television program, first season only). The 1939 film starring Basil Rathbone is an especially important addition, as it casts a heavy shadow on the adaptations that followed it. The 1964-68 BBC adaptation *Sherlock Holmes* ran with Douglas Wilmer (1964-5) as Holmes in the first series and Peter Cushing as Holmes in the second (1968). I chose to focus on Cushing's series rather than Wilmer's, as it seems to be more discussed anecdotally (particularly by later actors playing Sherlock Holmes) as influential on later adaptations. In cases where a program ran longer than a single series, I have focused on the first series, with the exception of *Sherlock*, whose series of three ninety-minute episodes each were short enough to allow me to look at series one and two. All of these decisions were made to narrowing the field of analysis while still capturing sufficient significant evidence. All the texts were viewed at least four times and transcribed for ease of analysis.

Since the text that sparked the project, *Sherlock*, was a television show, it made sense to focus on television shows, as an exhaustive survey of the body of Sherlock Holmes adaptations is far outside the scope of a Master's thesis. Another option, of course, would have been to confine myself to motion pictures only, but television programs are particularly useful as the data for this study. As long form texts, they focus more on character development over time, which provides a greater opportunity for

interaction between the two leads and also just more information to analyze. There is more meat for the genre analysis and a richer constructed world. Unfortunately, keeping the focus on television means omitting the Guy Ritchie-directed *Sherlock Holmes* of 2008 and *Game of Shadows* of 2011. The interesting themes of these movies, to me, involve the quasi-steampunk style and the aggressively modern camera work, editing, and special effects in a Victorian London. The issues of masculinity there are similar enough to those in *Sherlock* that I do not feel that its addition would justify the space required. I include a consideration of a possible future project on these films in the conclusion.

I use a standard discourse analysis (more on this below) to look closely at the texts themselves in a generic, rather than a socio-historical, context. This draws on the greater socio-historical context, obviously, but outside texts (such as legal constructions of gender or paratexts such as trailers and ads) are not utilized. My other primary methodology is genre analysis, grounded largely in Altman in particular (1984, 1999) to provide additional information about the texts that cannot be acquired by looking at any one of the texts in isolation. Both of these methods are grounded in feminist and queer theory perspectives, particularly in terms of constructions of masculinity in the detective genre specifically, that provide tools to unpack social and discursive complexities inaccessible from other perspectives. I apply ideas from film studies to television programs, not because film and television are precisely the same – they self-evidently are not – but because these are the originating texts of the theory and as audio-visual media film and television are similar enough that concepts from one apply to the other.

### Genre Analysis

Altman (writing in 1999) notes that "almost every film genre study of the last decade repeats the same litany of film genre theorists, all published in the last quarter century" (p. 13). The field of significant writers does not seem to have expanded much in genre studies since 1999. I base my understanding of film genre on Altman, Buscombe, Cawelti, Neale, and Williams, with a particular emphasis on Altman's 1999 *Film/Genre*. While many scholars like Buscombe (1970) and Cawelti (1995) (and Altman's own foundational article "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" from 1984) posit generic conventions that largely remain fixed after the genre emerges, Altman's 1999 book focuses on the ways in which genre is fluid. He considers genres "not as formal patterns or as textual canons, but as system and process" (p. 195). He makes the point that the meaning of genre occurs through discursivity and provides a focus for varied communities of viewers with varied needs and desires. This vision of genre suggests analysis as a series of snapshots of a moving target rather than pinning down some kind of stable essence of a genre, or in this particular case, Holmes-ness.

Philippa Gates cites Buscombe's definition of genre as "a body of films that share a set of conventions, including formal elements such as themes, types of action, and character types; and visual elements such as settings, costume, and props (Buscombe 14)" and also mentions Altman's caveat that texts within a genre "must share a common topic and a common structure (23)" (2006, p. 8). Genre exists only in the relationships between texts and deals with a shared pool of tropes that texts in a given genre (or genres – hybridization being an option) can make use of (Gledhill 2001, p. 224). We look at genre not just because it tells us about texts themselves, but because it explains the

cultural work entailed in both producing and consuming/understanding them; they are reflections of mass culture and therefore the society that produces that culture (Gledhill 2001, p. 222).

Gledhill suggests that genre is a useful alternative to the notion of the auteur, which is not well equipped for a serious critical appraisal of commercial cultural products, and that it fills a gap left "by the fragmenting of grand theory, which once promised to grasp films as part of a totalising 'social formation' or 'historical conjuncture'" (2001, p. 222). Genre studies can easily grapple with multiple, simultaneously circulating discourses in a way that auteurism and other unifying "grand theories" cannot, or can only do with difficulty. Likewise, genre is a useful alternative to adaptation studies, which would be a logical tool to apply to Sherlock Holmes adaptations but which concerns itself more with issues of intermediality and intertextuality than with the discursive constructions at work within the texts' meanings, particularly issues of change in social representations over time.

### **Discourse Analysis**

Many analyses of popular culture seem to utilize discourse analysis without actually mentioning it by name at all, and many authors who do go to the trouble to mention it are not precise in their definitions of it or the way they speak about it. Sara Mills notes, "It has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined" (1997, p. 1). The method of discourse analysis being used here is not of the strictest Foucauldian type, which would require more attention to the historical and sociological contexts of the texts than space allows, but discourse analysis as applied by

scholars in literature and the humanities. In this usage, discourses are systems of representation (Hall, 1997) that analysts use to examine specific texts in an attempt to "question the frontier between text and context by taking into consideration not only works but also larger units such as the literary field, discourse communities, and so forth" (Maingueneau, 2010, p. 152). Thus, the discourses found in texts are used to shed light on how those discourses circulate and are understood in the context of the broader society. While this differs from Foucault's usage, as Jana Sawicki notes, "Foucault invited his readers . . . to pick up what they found usable and ignore or discard the rest" (2005, p. 380).

While I do not take a strictly Foucauldian approach to discourse analysis here, his work is foundational in terms of how discourses are conceived as analytical tools. Feminists have frequently criticized Foucault for ignoring "gender issues as they relate to women" but many have found that his work allows them "to develop a model of power relations which is fairly complex and which can deal with other variables such as race and class without having to prioritise one of them over the others" (Mills 1997, p. 78). I use discourse here in the sense discussed by Dorothy Smith (cited in Mills 1997) wherein exploring "femininity as discourse means a shift away from viewing it as a normative order, reproduced through socialisation, to which women are somehow subordinated. Rather femininity is addressed as a complex of actual relations vested in texts" (Mills 1997, p. 88). This could apply to any discursively-produced category or narrative, of course, such as masculinity, heterosexuality, etc., and offers the possibility of contest, negotiation and resistance against the discourse at any given moment. Space for resistance and negotiation and the possibility of multiple, possibly-conflicted discourses

available in these feminist adaptations of Foucault enables an understanding of the multiple discourses at work in the texts analyzed here.

### **Theories of Gender and Masculinity**

In using these analytical tools, this study grounds itself in feminism, queer theory and theories of construction of gender. Butler's foundational notions of gender as socially constructed and performed are key, as Gates explains. Identity is something one does rather than something one is, and gender identity in particular "is a construct determined by culture to enforce the heterosexualization of desire by establishing distinct opposites of masculine and feminine (*Gender* 17)" (2006, p. 38). Also crucial to this study is Sedgwick's concept of homosociality to account for men's relationships and the ways that those relationships reinforce a hegemonic patriarchy. Alcaro offers David Richter's summary of Sedgwick's findings that "in light of . . . negative feelings for homosexuality, 'homosexual panic is assuaged by triangulation through a woman' (8)" (2011, p.2). Both Doty and Warner are also influential as early queer theorists who helped to define the idea of "queer" as being more about defiance of category and heteronormativity than a specific sexual orientation. Foucault is important as well, particularly his books *The History of Sexuality*, Vols. 1-3, not only for his own insights into how sexuality is constructed but also as a general influence on other theorists such as Butler, Sedgwick, Doty and Warner. These theoretical perspectives provide tools to unpack social and discursive complexities in popular texts that cannot be accessed in other ways.

Based on the work of these pioneering gender theorists, who mostly concentrated on examining femininity and heterosexuality with a critical eye, other theorists began

applying the same approach to the concept of masculinity. Beginning with 1995's *Masculinities*, R. W. Connell was one of the foundational theorists to look seriously at how masculinity is constructed. She built upon Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to posit a socially-accepted construction of masculinity she calls "hegemonic masculinity", which she defines as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." She stresses that hegemonic masculinity is the "currently accepted" patriarchal strategy, but that new circumstances or groups may challenge and reconstruct it; it is "a historically mobile relation" (1995, p.77). Hegemonic masculinity, with all its twists and turns, is perhaps the concept most starkly illuminated by my current study.

This notion of a fluid, hegemonic masculinity sits in contrast to another, frequently fielded idea in gender studies: masculinity in crisis. Kord and Krimmer write, "Since the 1990s, the field of men's studies has grown exponentially. Although different in ideology and method, most of these works agree on one defining parameter: contemporary masculinity is in crisis. . . . No longer the unquestioned masters of the universe, men now perceive themselves and are portrayed as beleaguered and oppressed" (2011, p. 1). This position, however, rests on a notion of masculinity as having been a stable, fixed concept at one point. Both Gates and Barry Keith Grant argue that this is overly simplistic. As Grant writes, "masculinity in American cinema, indeed, like all cultural categories of identity, has never been monolithic or stable; rather, it is an always-shifting concept, revised and reconstituted by the discourses of popular culture . . . as the needs of the historical moment require" (2011, p. 11). Gates notes, "The cause of crisis



for contemporary [millennial] masculinity has been identified as feminist empowerment, which began in the late 1960s and gathered momentum in the 1970s, but a crisis, by definition, cannot be so long lived" (2006, p. 49). I would argue that by some definitions, masculinity has been in crisis for hundreds of years. The undertaking of examining generic changes in expressions of masculinity in Sherlock Holmes adaptations rests upon the idea that multiple concepts of masculinity have been competing for dominance (or hegemonic status) throughout the period of production (approx. 1930 to 2014), contradicting the notion of a single crisis at any given point.

### **Coming Attractions**

Based on these methodological approaches and theoretical concepts, in the next chapter I will examine the relevant literature in greater detail, including foundational texts in genre studies, discourse analysis, and adaptation studies that comprise background for the methodology, foundational texts for the theoretical concepts in gender studies/feminism/queer theory, and texts that provide background for the genre and the specific texts under analysis.

I then turn to the analyses of the texts themselves, beginning first with an examination of the relationship between the character of Sherlock Holmes and the concept of order. I will show that Holmes adaptations move from a stable, Victorian-influenced masculinity of order to one that is destabilized and disorderly. Though order and masculinity have been tightly interwoven since the beginnings of the detective genre, this correlation begins to break down and/or become complicated as discourses of masculinity begin to proliferate. But in the end, even the most complicated and problematic of Holmesian heroes eventually solve the case and reassert order.

Chapter Four takes on the relationship(s) between Holmes and Watson, a dyad that becomes ever more central over time and one of the most interesting aspects of these texts. The increasing importance of Holmes and Watson's friendship rides the same cultural currents as the rise of the buddy film. The Sherlock Holmes stories, with their pre-existing strong male friendship, were perfectly placed to take advantage of the buddy film trope, although -- as with many other buddy narratives -- the convenient dearth of important women raised the always-terrifying possibility of the masculine discourse of homoeroticism. By the 21st century, homoerotic discourses begin escaping the confines of subtext and risk becoming text, partly through a greater cultural awareness and acceptance of homosexual relationships and partly through audience sophistication in regards to buddy film tropes. The increased emotion in the Holmes/Watson relationship addresses changes in masculinity that not only allow but demand a greater range of feeling from men, but it also maintains a somewhat gendered division of labour in that the relationship has a caretaking partner (Watson) and a partner who is cared for (Holmes), with Watson perceived as the more feminine, and secondary, partner. Between his/her medical expertise and his/her caretaking abilities, Watson's usefulness is overdetermined to such a degree that Watson and Sherlock's lives are inextricably intertwined.

Chapter Five looks at the character of Moriarty as a means of examining the texts' relationships with sociopathy and violence. For a character who appears in only one of the four novels and fifty-six short stories written by Doyle, Moriarty carries a tremendous amount of emotional, narrative, and cultural weight. While early adaptations tend to portray Moriarty as a skilled opponent but do not draw any particular parallels between

Holmes and Moriarty, later adaptations make close connections between the characters that construct the two as extremely similar, virtually two sides of the same coin. A conflation of hero and villain has been noted as endemic by several examinations of masculinity in popular culture, particularly within the detective genre. We will see evidence of that shift, moving from the decency and order of the Holmeses of the 1930s to *Sherlock's* explicit, textual references to Moriarty and Holmes' similarities, while *Elementary* goes so far as to play with the convention itself, offering a female Moriarty who has less in common with Sherlock than she thinks. Drawing tighter connections between Moriarty and Holmes meets the subtextual needs of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that require a doppelganger as an expected accessory for the well-dressed hero, but it also opens the question of the place of violence in relation to masculinity. *Sherlock* suggests that Holmes cannot hope to best Moriarty without both physical and emotional violence; violence and cruelty are necessary and inescapable. Any critique of Sherlock's methods is blunted by the fact that his actions are in service of the common good and the only way that society can be protected from unfettered sociopaths like Moriarty. But where *Sherlock* constructs Sherlock's sociopathy and social impairment as the strength that allows him to understand and therefore catch criminals, *Elementary* makes it clear that while his intellect does enable Sherlock to solve crimes, and is clearly his defining trait, it is also the source of his greatest weaknesses. *Elementary's* Sherlock agrees that he and Moriarty are intellectually similar, but what counts are his similarities with Watson, their shared values and their friendship. When he overcomes his arrogance and works in partnership with Watson, together they are able to defeat Moriarty without *Sherlock's* reliance on violence. This more diverse masculinity

provides room for female characters with important roles and allows for a much greater emotional complexity and texture in relationships. It suggests a process of moving beyond gender binaries in the 21st century and the possibility of greater freedom for men and women.

Lastly, Chapter Six concludes with a brief summary of my findings, a consideration of the lasting appeal of the character of Sherlock Holmes, and some possible directions for further research. Ultimately, even the latest adaptations of Sherlock Holmes maintain the status quo and have a generally positive attitude toward the police and government. As the most progressive of the texts I looked at, however, *Elementary* rejects a dysfunctional masculinity that clearly does not work and attempts to construct a healthier vision of masculinity that is comfortable with emotion, rational and mature, but retains all the strengths of the earlier Holmeses. This supports the literature's understandings of early 21st century masculinity as making moves to incorporate formerly "feminine" traits like empathy and emotional savvy while still maintaining some of the traits of hegemonic masculinity such as facility with violence.

These Sherlock Holmes adaptations generally tie both order and violence to masculinity; they grapple with how violence can coexist with a civilized community but also how society could possibly exist without it. The importance of these questions belies the status of these texts as low culture and begs a thorough analysis, which I hope to provide in this thesis.

## **Chapter Two – Literature Review**

As we explored in Chapter One, two key conceptual frameworks underpin this research – genre analysis and discourse analysis – and one key theoretical concept – masculinity as a discursive construction. This research also rests on literature concerning adaptation more generally, the subject matter of the detective genre specifically, the Doyle canon of Sherlock Holmes stories/novels, and the specific Sherlock Holmes adaptations that we will be looking at as case studies. This chapter will provide an overview of the relevant literature before we move to looking at our texts in detail.

### **Film Genre Analysis**

In her article "Rethinking Genre", Christine Gledhill suggests that genre analysis is "particularly useful now for its potential to fill a gap left by the fragmenting of grand theory, which once promised to grasp films as part of a totalising 'social formation' or 'historical conjuncture'" (2001, p. 221). She also notes that in genre, issues of texts and aesthetics "intersect with those of industry and institution, history and society, culture and audience – the central concerns of political economy, sociology, and cultural studies" (2001, p. 221). These considerations make genre analysis a particularly useful adjunct to discourse analysis as a methodology for understanding changes in popular culture over time, as genre's "conventions cross over into critical and cultural discourse and can be seen as an alternative public sphere" (Gates 2006, p. 7).

The current study continues from Altman's work on genre, both his 1984 article "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" and his 1999 book *Film/Genre*, with the understanding that this approach creates a snapshot of a moving target rather than pinning down a stable construction. Altman (1999) admits that in some ways film genre studies

is simply an extension of the millennia-long history of literary genre criticism, which tends to focus more strictly on large-scale form (the sonnet, or the novel, for example) than film/television genre studies do today. By the late 1960s, film genre studies began to develop a corpus of critics and ideas that responded to each other rather than to literary critics. Altman notes that the years since the 1980s have seen the emergence of film genre theory with "its own assumptions, its own *modus operandi*, and its own objects of study" and lists the writers of greatest import as "Altman, Buscombe, Cawelti, Doane, Elsaesse, Neale, Schatz, Williams, and . . . Will Wright" (p. 13). I would add Barry K. Grant to this list, as well. Of these, Altman is perhaps the most important, given his authorship of an important early text ("A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre" in 1984) and an important later text expanding his thinking from his foundational work (*Film/Genre* in 1999).

Most of the early contributors to film genre analysis, such as Altman (1984), Buscombe (2003), and Cawelti (2003), concern themselves with the emergence, delineation and stability of generic categories, often with case studies offered as examples that are analyzed with a seriousness not previously offered to popular "genre films" by film critics (an approach continued in the current research). Buscombe's article "The Idea of Genre in American Cinema", for instance, proposes inner and outer forms as the defining characteristics of genres. After establishing the boundaries of genre as he sees them, Buscombe then discusses the ways in which this definition of genre works in relation to Peckinpah's *Guns in the Afternoon*. This is very similar to Altman's (1984) formulation of semantic/syntactic generic elements, although even at that early point Altman was beginning to hint at ways in which genre might be more fluid than these

models allowed.

Altman's *Film/Genre* follows through on those nascent insights, with the addition of post-structuralist and post-modernist influences, to propose a vision of genre as an multi-modal, intertextual system/process, rather than a fixed set of patterns and characteristics that might be subject to a standard life cycle. While this text does not replace the earlier, more foundational considerations of formulation, it is an important addition that moves genre analysis forward into the postmodern era. The current research expands on Altman's later writing by utilizing the ideas to analyze specific texts in the Holmes sub-category of the detective genre with specific attention to constructions of masculinity.

### **The Detective Genre**

While those works form the foundation of the methodology here, other important works use that methodology to look at the crime or cop genre specifically. Steven Knight's *Form and Ideology in Crime Fiction* addresses structural issues in detective fiction, rather than films or television or adaptations, but it provides some excellent context regarding the beginnings of the genre and Doyle canon specifically and some discussion of the hero, which can be useful as a stand-in for the concept of masculinity, at least to a limited extent. *Mystery, Violence, and Popular Culture* by John Cawelti features four specific chapters/articles that focus on detective fiction, with discussion of the Sherlock Holmes stories/novels and/or adaptations specifically in three of those chapters. He looks at the development of the genre with some attention to issues of violence, but does not examine either the construction of the hero or of masculinity specifically. The current research fills the gap between these two texts by focusing

specifically on masculinity (which has some similarities to Knight) in a delineated group of texts (which shares similarities to Cawelti).

### **Adaptation Studies**

This research adds to research derived from adaptation studies, an outgrowth of film studies that crosses disciplines into literature, television studies, comparative literature, etc. In the early 2000s, Linda Hutcheon (2006), Thomas Leitch (2007), Robert Stam & Alessandra Raengo (2004, 2005) and Robert Stam (2006) shifted adaptation studies' focus from the narrow issues of fidelity that had preoccupied it since its inception to a broader range of concerns influenced by postmodernism (Johnson 2012, Leitch 2010). A second edition of Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* was published in 2013 with significant additions pertaining to new media in particular, with some discussion of the rise of multi-text franchises. Hutcheon attempts to correct the historical denigration of the adaptation as a lesser art form, discusses modes of adaptation, and looks at adaptation as both a product and a process, including some discussion of audience reception and also creative economy issues. The book covers a wide range of the issues of the field but its scope precludes detailed analyses of particular texts, though she does make some use of texts as examples. The current research adopts Hutcheon's approach of treating adaptations as texts in their own right, with very little consideration of the original Doyle canon and a complete lack of focus on issues of fidelity. Likewise, it also builds on Thomas Leitch's *Film Adaptation and its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ*, which addresses some of the specific adaptations analyzed in this research, and derives from a similar philosophical position as Hutcheon.

Stam's work has been mostly disregarded here. It is exhaustive, consisting of an



overview, *Literature Through Film: Realism, Magic, and the Art of Adaptation* and two edited collections with Alessandra Raengo, *Literature and Film: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Film Adaptation* and *A Companion to Literature and Film* but, while wide-ranging and international in the texts analyzed, these books focus more on the originating literature being adapted and therefore are not relevant to my approach in this thesis.

### **Discourse Analysis**

The starting point to any consideration of discourse must always be Foucault, even when using forms of discourse analysis that move away from his model. *The History of Sexuality* (1972, 1986a, 1986b) volumes are the most important of Foucault's texts for gaining an understanding of his use of the term discourse. The subject matter of the volumes has some bearing on the queer/gender theory aspects of my study, but generally Foucault does not focus specifically on feminism or gender constructions. I build upon later feminist scholars' use of the concept(s) of discourse as a methodological model.

Those scholars include Sara Mills, in her book *Discourse*, who provides an excellent overview of how Foucault's work on discourse has been adapted and expanded by feminist and post-colonial scholars. Similarly, Lois McNay's *Foucault & Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* discusses Foucault's last book *The Care of the Self* and makes the case that the book's ideas have more utility for feminism than credited previously, while also exploring the limitations that remain. Jana Sawicki's *Disciplining Foucault* also discusses the limitations and possibilities for Foucault's use in a feminist context, but looks at a wide range of his texts. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby's

*Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* is an edited collection that tends to be a bit more pessimistic about Foucault's possibilities for feminism, while maintaining a focus on how best to use his ideas for feminist ends. All of these books ultimately go beyond discourse as Foucault describes it to offer an expanded view of the concept that maximizes its utility as a methodological tool for feminism and other resistant movements.

### **Gender Studies and Queer Theory**

My use of these methodological frameworks is filtered through my theoretical perspectives on gender and sexual identity, based on some of the classics of the field.

*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* by Eva Kosofsky

Sedgwick introduces the idea of homosociality as a description of the multiple ways that men may relate to one another either to the exclusion of or through the proxy of women.

Her *Epistemologies of the Closet* historicizes the construction and maintenance of the categories homosexual male and heterosexual male and makes a case for the fluidity of these categories. Likewise, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* destabilizes gender, but more explicitly in the context of feminism and constructions of "the feminine". *Making Things*

*Perfectly Queer* by Alexander Doty and *Fear of a Queer Planet*, edited by Michael

Warner, both do further work to destabilize normative categories of gender and sexuality but also extend that destabilization to all kinds of categories, all of which are viewed as constructed and contingent. These are all foundational texts in understanding masculinity as a discursive construct, and also in making sense of the Holmes/Watson relationship.

After these initial attempts to deconstruct femininity, later theorists began applying the same ideas to the construction of masculinity. R. W. Connell's

*Masculinities* is a foundational study focused on the concept of hegemonic masculinity, adapted from Antonio Gramsci's work on class. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy" and states that "at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" (1995, p. 77). This notion allows for the circulation of multiple discourses around masculinity at any given time, rather than a unified, monolithic masculinity that is the same in all times and places. Given the nature of this research, I have focused most on studies of constructions of masculinity in the context of popular culture (particularly film), rather than on sociological studies, for example. The texts closest to this work have been those focused on the detective genres specifically (discussed in the following section), but it also builds on Joan Mellen's *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film*, an early look at constructions of hegemonic masculinity in popular American cinema, and Barry K. Grant's *Shadows of Doubt: Negotiations of Masculinity in American Genre Films*, which extends skepticism toward the notion of a masculine crisis, suggesting instead a greater focus on masculinity as an inherently unstable and fluid concept.

Some sociological studies are relevant to understanding the Watson/Holmes dynamic, specifically the analyses of male friendship, *Men's Friendships* edited by Peter Nardi and *Romantic Friendship in Victorian Literature* by Carolyn Oulton. Nardi's anthology of sociological studies reflects on male friendships in a variety of historical and ethnic contexts, examining competition and support and the limitations of each, whereas Oulton's book focuses specifically on the Victorian era but looks at the romantic friendships of both men and women. Lampert & Ervin-Tripp's "Risky laughter: Teasing

and Self-Directed Joking Among Male and Female Friends", sheds light on acceptable forms of jokes and teasing among and between genders. This research builds on these studies in exploring differences in representation between Lucy Liu's Joan Watson and her male John Watson counterparts.

### **Constructions of Masculinity in the Detective Genre**

The work that has been the most influential in conducting this research is undoubtedly Philippa Gates' books, *Detecting Men: Masculinity and the Hollywood Detective Film*, and *Detecting Women: Gender and Genre in the Hollywood Detective Film*. Like Barry Grant, Gates sees constructions of masculinity (and femininity) as constantly fluctuating and unstable categories rather than being at a particular point of crisis (due to the rise of feminism, for example). Working chronologically, these books use American detective films as case studies for how constructions of masculinity and femininity have played out in culture over time. Gates has an interest in the "hero" trope and how it intertwines with constructions of gender, and also the construction of the hero's twin, the villain. She outlines the prevalent trends, while not attempting to force all texts into a unitary theory. My own research extends Gates' work by utilizing a similar genre analysis-based methodology grounded in gender studies, but with a narrower focus exclusive to Sherlock Holmes adaptations.

*Contemporary Hollywood Masculinities: Gender, Genre, and Politics* by Susanne Kord & Elisabeth Krimmer is also influential in providing an excellent overview of constructions of masculinity in popular film, organized by genre rather than chronology. While not entirely focused on detective or cop films, Kord & Krimmer devote a chapter to cop/detective films and some of the ideas from the other chapters also apply to

Sherlock Holmes adaptations. Kord & Krimmer are more persuaded by the notion of masculine crisis than Gates, Grant, or myself, but my research builds on their findings. Likewise, Rebecca Feasey's chapter "Police and Crime Drama: Investigating Male Authority" in her book *Masculinity and Popular Television* provides a brief history of constructions of gender in police television shows and offers some specific discourse analysis of *24* and *Spooks*. Feasey also subscribes to the theory of masculine crisis but addresses television programs specifically, and looks at connections between social authority and masculinity, an analysis which I build upon for my chapters on order and also Moriarty. Cynthia J. Fuchs' article "The Buddy Politic" argues that the cop-buddy film's project is to "simultaneously represent and efface differences which threaten the buddy alliance" (p. 194). She uses Sedgwick's notion of the homosocial in combination with discourse analysis to examine masculinity and racism in a handful of buddy-cop films. I build upon this combination of tools and her findings in my consideration of the Holmes/Watson relationship.

### **Sherlock Holmes**

I was surprised by the lack of scholarly work that looks specifically at film and television adaptations of Sherlock Holmes, particularly the earlier adaptations. Thomas Leitch's *Film Adaptation and Its Discontents: From Gone with the Wind to The Passion of the Christ* does offer a chapter titled "The Hero With A Hundred Faces", which looks at adaptations of Sherlock Holmes as adaptations specifically. This chapter was one of the few scholarly texts I could find that discusses Jeremy Brett's Granada-produced television series seriously, as well as briefly looking at some of the earlier adaptations and also providing some much-needed context around the early history of Holmes

adaptations. My work here fills this gap by providing an analysis of some of the earlier texts in the context of the whole genre, while adding the new programs that have not been written about extensively as of yet.

Slightly more scholarly work has been done on the Doyle stories and novels, but even this has been neglected in comparison to the character's impact on popular culture. Most influential on the current work is Rosemary Jann's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Detecting Social Order*. Jann looks at Doyle's collection *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* in detail, focusing on Holmes' position as a pillar of social stability and the status quo. The stories in that collection are the most frequently adapted as television episodes, so the discussion was important both in terms of covering the topic of Holmes' relationship to order and also carried over to some of the relevant television adaptations.

"My Dear Holmes: Examining Sedgwick's Theory of Homosociality in *The Sign of the Four*" by Mary M. Alcaro makes use of Sedgwick's concept of homosociality, like Fuchs, but she applies it to Doyle's *The Sign of the Four*. She examines the Holmes/Watson relationship and Watson's literary marriage in detail, though, sadly, series 3 of *Sherlock* (which includes John Watson's marriage and would have been interesting to examine in light of this article), was released too late to be included in this research.

Both *Sherlock* and *Elementary* are too new to have much written about them, *Elementary* in particular as it only debuted in 2012. Two books with a focus on *Sherlock* were published in 2012: *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series*, edited by Louise Ellen Stein & Kristine Busse and *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, edited by Lynette Porter, which discusses both *Sherlock* and

the Guy Ritchie-directed motion pictures *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*. In Porter's book, an article by April Toadvine titled "The Watson Effect: Socializing the Sociopath" looks at the character of John Watson in *Sherlock* and argues that he is constructed as being as much of a sociopath as Sherlock as part of a societal pattern of normalizing and valorizing violence. "'Don't Make People Into Heroes, John': (Re/De)Constructing The Detective As Hero" by Francesca M. Marinaro & Kayley Thomas looks at constructions of the hero in *Sherlock* and the ways in which *Sherlock* is actually constructed as John's heroic quest rather than Sherlock's. "The Noble Bachelor and the Crooked Man: Subtext and Sexuality in the BBC's *Sherlock*" by Carlen Lavigne is not quite as intellectually sophisticated as the Toadvine piece but it addresses the issues of subtext and sexuality in *Sherlock*, arguing that the show plays with homosexual subtext but then reincorporates it into heteronormativity. Lavigne does this primarily through discourse analysis, though, like many authors, she does not discuss her use of that method directly. I find her analysis compelling but also under-theorized; she makes very little use of outside sources on queer theory (for example) and her textual analysis is not very detailed. However, it does provide some interesting metatextual material. "Sex and the Single Sleuth" by Anissa M. Graham & Jennifer C. Garlen concerns Sherlock Holmes adaptations and the construction of the Holmes character as a sex symbol. This article addresses several of the earlier adaptations, including the Brett vehicle at some length, in addition to *Sherlock* and the Ritchie-directed *Sherlock Holmes* films. Its discussion of Brett influenced my thinking most, though like many of the articles in that collection, it could be accused of being under-theorized. Stein & Busse's *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom*, as the title would suggest, focuses on fandom and

audience reception. Tom Steward's "Holmes on the Small Screen: The Television Contexts of *Sherlock*" discusses the influences of earlier television adaptations on *Sherlock*, and offers some insights on some of the specific texts analyzed here. "Terror, Nostalgia and the Pursuit of Sherlock Holmes in *Sherlock*" by Ellen Burton Harrington argues that the series sets Moriarty up as Sherlock's biggest fan and also discusses some of the ways that the series constructs notions of fame, mass media and fandom. Lastly, one article was published quite recently that addresses *Elementary* in addition to *Sherlock* and the Ritchie films, Ashley Polasek's "Surveying the Post-Millennial Sherlock Holmes: A Case for the Great Detective as a Man of Our Times", published in the journal *Adaptation*. Polasek makes a case for Sherlock Holmes in these adaptations as a 21st century anti-hero and outlines the ways in which the three versions are similar, particularly in their psychological dysfunction and dependence on Watson. The current research builds on all of these articles in significant ways. While none of these texts utilize genre analysis, they all take their low-culture, genre texts as serious objects of study and use their analyses as means of understanding cultural change. Many provided insights that illuminated the discourse analyses in this thesis, as well as offering context for the texts analyzed here.

Despite the challenges of working with texts that are either somewhat neglected by scholars or so new that work on them has not yet appeared, I feel secure that this research rests on solid foundations, in addition to filling gaps in the literature.



### Chapter Three – "Crimes Which the Law Cannot Touch": Sherlock and Order

John Cawelti notes that "Conan Doyle's attitudes were deeply Victorian and he strongly affirmed most of the values of traditional British culture in his stories by making his Holmes and Watson embody the combination of solidity, morality, and eccentricity so central to the ideal of the British gentry" (2004, p. 277). I would add that these all are elements of an ideal Victorian masculinity, as well. In contrast, as we have already examined, late 20th century and early 21st century masculinity consists of multiple discourses circulating simultaneously, many of which construct masculinity as either problematic or embattled (see Chapter Two). In this chapter, we will examine the movement in Holmes adaptations from a stable, Victorian-influenced masculinity of order to one that is destabilized and disorderly, through an examination of 1931's *The Sleeping Cardinal* (a.k.a. *Sherlock Holmes' Fatal Hour*), 1939's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1968's *Sherlock Holmes*, 1984's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 2009's *Sherlock*, and 2012's *Elementary*. (Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Game of Shadows* (2011), though outside the scope of this project, will be considered in light of the ideas of this chapter in the conclusion.)

The detective genre in general is fundamentally conservative and supportive of the status quo. Cawelti writes, "When he/she solves the crime, the detective reaffirms the fundamental soundness of the social order by revealing how the crime has resulted from the specific and understandable motives of particular individuals; crime happens but is not fundamental or endemic to the society" (2004, p. 286). Gates agrees and notes that "the genre is about containment and closure: the detective film [or television episode] presents a problem – the mystery – to be investigated and resolved by the end of the film"

(2006, p. 24). The status quo, of course, includes a specific, hegemonic vision of masculinity as a fundamental aspect of order and the social fabric. Feasey explains, "The police and crime drama can be understood as one of the most masculine of television [and film] genres due to the fact that it tends to focus on the public sphere, professional roles and the male world of work" (2008, p. 80).

In addition to its professional focus, the genre -- particularly Holmes adaptations - - relies heavily on the idea of rationality and science (forensics) as an antidote to the disorder of crime. R. W. Connell reminds us that a foundational tenant of patriarchal ideology is that men are rational while women are irrational and emotional. "Science and technology, seen by the dominant ideology as the motors of progress, are culturally defined as a masculine realm. Hegemonic masculinity establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of reason, and thus represent the interests of the whole society" (1995, p. 164). Order and masculinity are tightly entwined in the detective genre, but this correlation begins to break down and/or become complicated as discourses of masculinity begin to proliferate in the late 1960s. Barry Keith Grant states that by the early 1990s, "the essentially monolithic construction of white masculinity in genre movies has been fractured by the emergence of other voices," including women and black men (2001, p. 188). Holmes adaptations follow this trajectory of presenting a stable, rational Holmes who is a bastion of both masculinity and order in the early adaptations that gives way to ever-greater disorder as we move toward the 21st century, and also a greater diversity in the types of people who are acceptable representatives of social order.

Gates argues that "the birth of detective fiction coincided with the birth of the modern police force" and quotes Robert Reiner's assertion that the classical detective was

"a rational and unfailing resourceful individual symbolising a superior ideal of self-disciplined initiative, who is symbiotically related to a well-ordered social organisation (Politics 147)" (2006, p. 56). Certainly we see a relatively tight connection to the official police in the early texts that weakens as we move toward the 21st century. Marinaro & Thomas note *Sherlock's* Holmes' "detachment from the public institutions of social order [such as] the government and the police force" (2012, p. 73) but despite this, as Toadvine, Marinaro & Thomas, and Gates recognize, even the later Holmes adaptations demonstrate that society can successfully maintain the status quo and contain its disorderly elements by virtue of the inevitable triumph of the hero and the destruction (either by death or incarceration) of the villain (2012, p.61; 2012, p. 73; 2006, p. 66).

However conservative their ultimate stance, though, the later Holmeses' ambivalence about institutions, while it appears disorderly, underscores the extreme individualism lurking under the support of the status quo. Kord and Krimmer note, "In film after film, clear and present danger is averted by exceptional individuals, never by organizations, or, God forbid, institutions . . . . Incompetent and malevolent bureaucracies do not solve problems; they are the problem" (2011, p. 3). Cawelti quotes Ronald R. Thomas' notion that the individualism of detective stories is part of a societal movement toward "identifying persons in terms of their identity rather than their characters (287)" and notes that this emerging idea of the individual underpinned forensic technologies like fingerprint identification, the lie detector, and photography (2004, p. 306-7). In the end, this individualism works to shore up even the most corrupt systems. If individual action, even that requiring exceptional actors, is all that is needed to set society right, then large-scale change is unnecessary, even possibly unwise or morally wrong. "Again and again,

personal growth renders structural change unnecessary. . . .We are not dealing with larger socioeconomic structures, but with moral shortcomings, which can be addressed by removing the culprit" (Kord & Krimmer 2011, p. 8).

Interestingly, one wide-spread change operates on a individual level but has fairly far-reaching consequences for masculinity, which is the greater allowance for emotional expression in men and a loosening of the self-discipline that Reiner cites in the quote above. That shift is quite apparent with an examination of the texts over time as Holmes becomes increasingly impulsive and emotional, despite his oft-mentioned reliance on logic and intellect. Polasek sees this change as a move toward a childishness and volatility that requires a Watson that can act "as an emotional mediator" (2013, p. 390). I regard this as part and parcel of the trend that Kord & Krimmer identify as "mirroring a social shift to the valuing of a more sensitive and vulnerable masculinity" (2011, p. 217). Not only are men now allowed to display emotion, but they are required to, as "even action heroes must now reconcile the sensitivity of the new family man with the violence required for the job" (2011, p. 4). However, that emotionality belies the strict order and calm of the earlier adaptations and demonstrates ambivalence about the place of masculinity, which can be frightening and uncontained, while at the same time ultimately recouping disorder into the status quo and defanging it.

***The Sleeping Cardinal* (USA title: *Sherlock Holmes' Fatal Hour*), 1931. Film produced by Twickenham Film Studios. Starring Arthur Wontner as Holmes and Jan Fleming as Watson.**

We begin with *The Sleeping Cardinal*, starring Arthur Wontner as Sherlock Holmes, Jan Fleming as Dr. John Watson and Norman McKinnel as Professor Robert

Moriarty. The plot of the film revolves around an overcomplicated counterfeiting scheme wherein former mathematician Robert Moriarty's henchmen break into banks to take legitimate notes and replace them with forged ones, then smuggle the real ones overseas. Scotland Yard brings Holmes in on the case after the murder of a guard during one of the break-ins, the incident which opens the film. The film's attention then shifts to Holmes' soon-to-be client, Kathleen Adair (Jane Welsh) and her brother Ronald (Leslie Perrins), who has fallen into trouble due to cheating at cards. Moriarty uses this fact to blackmail him into transporting the stolen currency and eventually kills him to eliminate him as a possible witness. After some additional skullduggery by Moriarty, including seizing Watson and tying him up and an unsuccessful sniper attack on Holmes, Holmes reveals Moriarty's disguise as the Adair's family friend and the police apprehend him.

Philippa Gates writes, "The classical male detective of nineteenth-century fiction was the product of, and intended as the antidote for, the anxieties of the upper classes in regard to the perceived threat to social order that was posed by the lower classes. As such, the classical detective was, as Robert Reiner suggests, a "rational and unfailing resourceful individual symbolising a superior ideal of self-disciplined initiative, who is symbiotically related to a well-ordered social organisation" (2011, p. 17). *The Sleeping Cardinal* is an example of the detective as a remedy to social disorder. Wontner's Holmes is associated with both the rational and a stable social order. The obvious connection between logic and his deductions applies, but he also has close ties to the police. Lestrade makes a call to him at his home in the morning and though Holmes says, quite pleasantly, that he and Lestrade so often disagree, Lestrade professes a great deal of respect for Holmes' theories and leaves a piece of evidence with him for Holmes'

leisurely examination, a state of collegiality that does not always reign in either Doyle canon or later adaptations. The household in general is orderly and conspicuously harmonious. Mrs. Hudson (Minnie Rayner) says that Holmes becomes grumpy if you interrupt him while he is thinking, but we have to take her word for it, as he is never actually shown as being anything but polite, charming and genial. The house in general is covered in bookshelves but tidy and comfortable overall. There are no strange curios



**Figure 1 - 221B Baker S. in *The Sleeping Cardinal*, with a friendly Lestrade**

or grisly experiments evident anywhere. Everything we see marks Holmes as an orderly, if unusually intelligent, cog in the machinery of society.

What little eccentricity he does display proves to be case-related and charmingly harmless. During the course of an interrogation with LaStrade in charge, Holmes draws the conversation off on tangents related to tiger hunting and particular types of trees, both of which eventually end up having connections to the case, of course, but which baffle LaStrade and Watson alike. LaStrade says that he sometimes wonders about Holmes'

sanity, and Watson responds with a good-natured laugh. This is the extent of his unusual behaviour, though, and the viewer is left with the impression of a man who is perhaps extraordinary in his abilities but highly-regarded, well-connected, and quite ordinary in his relationships with other people, if a trifle more democratic with his housekeeper than one might expect in that he holds the door for her and helps her to fold up the tablecloth. His house and his household are tidy, uncluttered, well-kept, and conventional.

The main themes of the film seem to be that crime, specifically disguise and cheating – affronts to the order and appearance of society - does not pay. Ronald Adair, card cheat and unwilling smuggler, is punished for his sins by being murdered. Moriarty's disguise – his destabilization of identity – is stripped away, along with his veneer of civility (which we will look at more closely in Chapter Five) and he is apprehended and contained. Order is restored, with Holmes' assistance. The lesson seems to be that disorder may erupt from time to time in society but it is quickly righted by the institutions and forces of order.

***The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1939. Film produced by 20th Century Fox. Starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson.***

The contortions of the rococo plot and an inciting failure of the justice system construct a world significantly more disordered than that of *The Sleeping Cardinal* but one that nevertheless can be tamed by Holmes. The greater disorder in 1939's *Adventures* perhaps reflects a more disorderly historical context and the need for greater reassurance that disorder and wrongdoing can be overcome by the individual (never collective) efforts of a single, extraordinary individual. The greater the disorder that Holmes can master, the more reassuring the underlying message, an equation that we will see played out in

the rest of our adaptations over time.

The film opens with a courtroom where Moriarty (George Zucco) is being tried for murder and is found not guilty. Holmes rushes in with new evidence to convict but he is too late; Moriarty is a free man and cannot be brought to trial again on the same charge. Holmes and Moriarty then share a horse-drawn cab in the rainy streets and banter about their rivalry;



**Figure 2 - Holmes & Moriarty chat in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes***

Moriarty promises to ruin Holmes by committing the crime of the century under his nose (but does not threaten to kill him, interestingly). Moriarty's plot is to arrange Lloyd Brandon's (Peter Willes) murder by an assassin, apparently just to provide a diversion for Holmes while a robbery of the crown jewels is taking place. The connections between the Brandon family and Moriarty are never fully explained and the loose ends are hastily tied at the end with a bit of rushed exposition from Holmes that the assassin, a South



American flute-player named Mateo (George Regas), who also was acting as Moriarty's servant, was seeking revenge against the Brandon family because of a dispute over a gold mine with the Brandon *pater familias*, now long dead. Holmes eventually sees through the red herring and does battle at the top of the Tower of London with one of Moriarty's henchmen. The jewels are saved, and Mateo the assassin and the tower henchman incarcerated, though Moriarty remains free.

While Holmes' little section of town seems as pleasant and ordered as can be, beyond it is a London that harbors vengeful South American flutists armed with exotic weapons like bolas, who carry grievances that their targets know nothing about. Moriarty is the master of this disorder, while Holmes is his parallel as the master of ordered world. However, the fact that Moriarty is not recovered and the miscarriage of justice that opens the film never corrected leaves an interesting open question of just how stable this society is beneath the surface. The order provided by the final exposition rings hollow with the antagonist still at large, though of course it opens the way for conflicts in future sequels, although the films after 1941 largely made use of Nazis in the contemporary setting for their villains – perhaps Professor Moriarty seemed inadequately threatening when a real-life Hitler was available for comparison. With Europe in far greater disorder than the scope of most films could encompass, more than a surface resolution of order may have seemed insupportably unrealistic.

Holmes himself is considerably more congenial and social than in many of the later adaptations. His relationship with his servants is more formal and less warm than in *The Sleeping Cardinal* but still quite congenial. He is both kind and jolly with a teenage boy in his employ while Watson suggests he should be firmer. He warmly invites in the

guardian of the crown jewels (E. E. Clive) as an old friend and offers his help protecting a stone that will be arriving by ship. All of these relationships set Holmes squarely in a community and give the impression of history and interactions that are affable and fairly commonplace. This Holmes' eccentricities consist of experiments with flies and hanging around with a doctor who seems intellectually far beneath him. Holmes' house is, as in the Wontner version, uncluttered and neat.



**Figure 3 - Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce in their cheery 221B**

The overall impression of the Holmes household is one of cheerful order. This corresponds with late-Victorian and early-20th century ideas about masculinity that form the basis for the hegemonic masculinity of today. Toadvine references James Eli Adams' book *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*, writing that Victorian "men in non-manual professions were expected to display the kind of emotional and physical self-discipline that showed them capable of exerting and, more importantly,

controlling themselves on par with those whose labor required this exertion daily (17)" (qtd in 2012, p. 50). Unlike the later Holmeses we will examine, these early versions are not subject to visible mood swings, addictions, or poor social skills. As Toadvine states, men who were "unwilling or unable to control themselves, or who did not fit social views of traditional morality, were often diagnosed as mentally ill. During the 19th century this was particularly true of those who seemed antisocial" (2012, p. 50). Holmes' apparent good humor and warm relations with others is a necessary part of his masculine role as a protector of societal order.

***Sherlock Holmes, 1964-1968. Television series produced by BBC Television.***

**Starring Peter Cushing as Holmes and Nigel Stock as Watson.**

*Sherlock Holmes* ran on BBC television with one series beginning in 1964 starring Douglas Wilmer as Holmes and Nigel Stock as Watson and a second series beginning in 1968 starring Peter Cushing as Holmes and again Nigel Stock as Watson. (Cushing also played Holmes in the 1959 Hammer Studios film adaptation of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which is not under consideration here – the television series filmed its own adaptation that is mentioned.) The series is set in Victorian London, and is fairly faithful to the narratives of the original Holmes stories, each episode being an adaptation of one of the short stories.

The first episode is the often-adapted "The Blue Carbuncle". The episode opens in a posh hotel, where the Duchess of Morcar (Madge Ryan) discovers the theft of her most precious gemstone, the blue carbuncle of the title. She goes to 221B to demand that Holmes take the case, but Holmes refuses, explaining that his "time over this Christmas period will be entirely occupied," and then, more frankly when she refuses to take no for

an answer, that "there is not a single aspect of it which is of interest to me." He is polite (and the conversation between the two actors is like the Battle of the Rolling Rs) but insistent and disoblises a lady, which is hard to imagine in any of the earlier Holmeses. After Lady Morcar leaves, a policeman shows up with the lost stone, which was found inside a Christmas goose and Holmes, at length, deduces that the culprit was Ryder (James Beck), the under-manager at the hotel and lover of the lady's maid. Holmes confronts Ryder in private, and Ryder tearfully pleads not to be thrown to the police. Holmes obliges him with a 12-hour head start to leave town, after obtaining a signed confession so that the workman who was wrongfully accused will be released. Holmes says, "I am not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies. LaStrade had no right to arrest the most obvious suspect before making a search of everyone concerned." He admits, "I am compounding a felony, no doubt, but I am saving a soul" because Ryder would have become a career criminal if he would have been taken to jail. Ryder leaves and Holmes and Watson happily look forward to their own Christmas bird.

Rosemary Jann notes, "Holmes may appear to stand outside the law on a higher moral ground, but his actions are based on a careful and ultimately comforting calculation of the risks involved for the status quo" (1995, p. 81). He is sure that Ryder will never offend again and his position as a gentleman amateur allows him to disregard the letter of the law in favour of society's overall good. However, this calculation implicates the police as incompetent at best. When individuals must take the law into their own hands for justice to be done, then the justice system is broken. Gates notes that this edges more toward the noir understanding of the male detective than the classical one with which Holmes is usually associated. "Whereas the the classical detective story presented a

society that was predominantly good . . . noir presented a society that was pervaded by evil, and any of its citizens, including the detective-hero, could be capable of evil" (2006, p. 7). While this episode is still firmly within the bounds of the classical detective, the vision of the police as unable to correct injustice makes sense its historical late-60s context, as does the individual hero taking the law into his own hands out of benevolence.

Likewise, this Holmes is more bohemian than in earlier adaptations. 221B Baker Street is more the overstuffed, genteel-but-shabby bachelor's quarters described in Doyle's stories than the clean, cheery rooms we have seen to this point. While not unkempt or dirty in any way, the furniture and set dressings are all a bit worn and faded, shelves are crowded with books and the upholsteries are suitably Victorian and visually busy. Holmes also seems both more emotional and more emotionally needy. The fact



**Figure 4 - Peter Cushing in an overstuffed 221B**

that Watson leaves for the country and then goes to see a patient, both times leaving

Holmes alone in his study, makes Watson seem less attached to Holmes than vice versa; this is the opposite of the impression that one gets with the Rathbone/Bruce pictures, considering how Watson follows Holmes around like a lost puppy despite his needling. One gets the sense that Stock's Watson is less emotionally sensitive than Cushing's Holmes, which is an interesting contrast to how the roles are played in the 21st century versions, although Watson does bring him a Christmas present so the emotional connection is not entirely uni-directional.

Holmes connections to the community have broken down to some degree in this adaptation, as well. With the exception of Watson, his relationships are purely professional contacts: the police, people he has met through cases. His reputation leads Lady Morcar to attempt to engage his services, via recommendations through Lord Baskerville, rather than some personal connection. He never leaves the flat without Watson in this episode. He refuses a lady's request for help, and refuses the considerable amounts of money she offers him for his services. He neglects to purchase a Christmas present for his friend. Most importantly, he criticizes the police and then undermines them by abetting Ryder's escape. While still serving the public good, and upholding the aristocracy's rights, Holmes is beginning a slide into the more conflicted character that will emerge over time.

***The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1984-5 (first and second series).***

**Television series produced by Granada Television. Starring Jeremy Brett as Holmes and David Burke as Watson. Series one episode one "A Scandal in Bohemia".**

Thus we come to Sherlock Holmes as played by Jeremy Brett, the other actor often cited along with Rathbone as being a "definitive" Holmes, though as Thomas Leitch notes, "if there can be two definitive Holmeses, surely there can be a hundred" (2007, p. 231). Leitch writes that Brett was the first Holmes to challenge Rathbone's supremacy and that, in addition to the production design's then-unprecedented fidelity to the Victorian period, "the most striking innovation of the Granada adaptations is Brett's performance as Holmes . . . . Brett played him as hectic and hectoring, a clinical case of manic-depression who frequently fell into illnesses from which only the challenge of new adventures could rouse him . . . [and] showed Holmes constantly swinging between moody self-absorption and fullthroated ridicule of the suspect, the police, and even his clients" (2007, p. 225). Graham & Garlen see Brett as "the touchstone against which all subsequent versions of the character must be measured" (2012, p. 29).

The series is widely considered the adaptation most "faithful" to Doyle's original canon (Leitch, 2007; Graham & Garlen, 2012) though Leitch notes that Brett's portrayal of Holmes was considerably more moody than Doyle's stories would lead one to expect. The series ran intermittently from 1984 to 1994 under several different titles. The first two series (or seasons they would be called in North America) of seven and six episodes respectively were released as *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*; *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* included series three (seven episodes), a *The Sign of Four* made-for-television

movie, series four (four episodes), and a *Hound of the Baskervilles* made-for-television movie; *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes* included series five (six episodes) and series six (three episodes); and *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* consisted of series seven (six episodes). The series adapted the majority of Doyle's sixty Sherlock Holmes stories/novels and not only kept to the plots of the stories for the most part but was also notably faithful to period, an authenticity that was frequently lacking in earlier efforts (Steward, 2012). The series stars Jeremy Brett as Holmes and David Burke as Watson in the first series, then Edward Hardwicke as Watson for the remainder of the run.

Like many of the film and television adaptations, episodes typically begin with the commission of the crime rather than in discussion in 221B. The series' first episode, "A Scandal In Bohemia", opens with Irene Adler (Gayle Hunnicutt) foiling a burglary attempt and a voice-over from Watson as he arrives in a cab to 221B. He finds Holmes about to engage in an interview about a case, with a client who turns out to be the King of Bohemia (Wolf Kahler). The King is being threatened with the exposure of an affair with actress and singer Irene Adler. While characterized as an famous "adventuress", Irene is the one marrying for love while the King is marrying for money. She refuses to sell the photograph of the two of them together and foils all the illegal attempts that are made to steal it, including Holmes' own burglary while disguised. While Irene is the wronged party, which even the King admits, Holmes (as usual) assists the aristocracy in maintaining the fiction of its reputation. Nevertheless, Holmes ends the episode saying that the King is not Irene's equal. Irene takes her place in the Holmes pantheon as "THE WOMAN", as Watson's voice-over informs us at the beginning, and Holmes makes a watch-fob souvenir out of the sovereign she tipped him while he was disguised.



Throughout all of this, Brett's Holmes is shown to be a source of order in the sense that he solves crimes; he makes disruptions to social order legible and eliminates them, either by handing the culprits over to the police or by neutralizing the culprit so that they are no longer threatening, as he does in this episode with Irene Adler. However, this Holmes seems a rather disorderly figure to carry one's hopes of maintaining the status quo. David Stuart Davies says of Brett's Holmes that "there was a dangerous, almost eccentric, edge to his playing which was attractive, and fascinating, but which also created a sense of pleasurable unease in the audience" (qtd in Graham & Garlen, 2012, p. 29). Brett's volatility imparts a sense of unpredictability to the character that is missing from the stable, gentlemanly Holmeses of Wontner and Rathbone.

The set design of 221B subtly indicates this before any of the characters speak.



**Figure 5 - Jeremy Brett's study in 221B**

Holmes' study, though clean, certainly could not be referred to as tidy. The desk is

covered in papers and precariously-stacked books, while still more loose pages are shoved into the shelves of the glassed-in bookcase in the corner. Random objects cover the top of the credenza and a box with case files and more papers sit on the table. It is far from orderly and Holmes hurriedly shoves the papers from the table into a more concealed location when the King, his client, arrives, in a last-minute (and insufficient) bid to make things look more respectable. The clutter is more fitting with the stereotype of the absent-minded professor than an orderly quasi-officer of the law, and it is far more disorderly than the rooms of the earlier adaptations.

More tellingly, the subject of his fondness for intravenous cocaine comes up almost immediately in this first episode, and Dr. Watson scolds him for endangering his intellect with drug taking. Although cocaine was a legal drug at the time of Doyle's original writings, in the mid-80s it was known to be addictive and was associated with the underclasses and bohemians like musicians and actors. By raising this issue from Doyle canon as soon as it does - and speaking explicitly about the fact that Holmes' drug use endangers the faculties that allow him to serve society - the episode intentionally distinguishes Brett's Holmes from Rathbone's very straight-laced hero, as does the emotional nature of the Watson/Holmes relationship, made clear in this first episode by Holmes' passive aggressive tricks (discussed further in Chapter Four). He is much more ambiguous as an authority figure in comparison to earlier versions.

Holmes' affinity for disorder is also reflected in his love of disguise. He spends a significant amount of time in this episode in disguise, first as a labourer working outside Adler's home as cover for his surveillance, then as a preacher who happens by the scene when the workers outside engage in a riot over who would get to help her out of her

carriage -- an incident manufactured by Holmes to gain entrance to Adler's house.

Holmes' penchant for disguise also mirrors Adler's; she disguises herself as a boy and is convincing enough to fool



**Figure 6 - Jeremy Brett's Holmes disguised as a preacher**

Holmes. As Rosemary Jann notes, the transgression of class, position and gender enabled by disguise destabilizes the social order, implying that it rests not on innate differences but on mere appearances that can be manufactured by those with enough skill and daring (1995, p. 65).

However, while this adaptation flirts with defying the social order, ultimately Holmes definitively upholds it. Everything he accomplishes in the episode serves to shore up aristocratic privilege and masculine hegemonic domination. Even his position as a figure outside the confines of professional law enforcement, which might appear on

the surface to be an anti-establishment position, reinforces the status quo. As Gates writes, the figure of the extra-legal detective offers "a sense of reassurance that, even if the police could not uncover the identity of the criminal, the detective could succeed where the law failed" (2006, p. 65). Regardless of the fallibility of institutions, or the attractiveness of rogue figures like Irene Adler, the status quo will always be maintained.

Adler is an interesting case because she is constructed as being worthy of admiration. She is the only woman who kindles any interest at all in Holmes, and is shown to be far more moral and virtuous than the King whose cause Holmes takes up. But as an adventuress, the source of a scandal, a headstrong woman who will not do as the King wishes, a woman who dresses in men's clothing to move through the city freely, a woman who can outwit the great Holmes, Irene has the potential to be extremely disruptive to the hegemonic order. She is suppressed through her safe, love-match marriage and defused but Holmes' admires her for her disruptive qualities, as does the viewer. There is some sense that Holmes wishes things could be different but he is bound by the need to uphold the status quo. In that contradiction, perhaps, is the seed of the partial dissolution of Holmes' attachment to the respectable that we see in our 21st century adaptations. Order, and the rights of the aristocracy, are still maintained in the end and Holmes' eccentricity does not extend to the anti-social antics of Cumberbatch's Holmes. However, this Holmes is a marked departure from his earlier brethren and is a harbinger of greater destabilization to come.

***Sherlock*, 2010-ongoing. Television series produced by BBC Television, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson. Series one episode one "A Study in Pink", series one episode three "The Great Game", series two episode one "A Scandal in Belgravia", series two episode two "The Hounds of Baskerville", series two episode three "The Reichenbach Fall".**

*Sherlock* is ongoing, having begun in 2010 and aired its third series in 2014, with a fourth series confirmed by BBC and a fifth series rumoured to be in planning stages. Each series has only three ninety-minute episodes each. *Doctor Who* alums Stephen Moffat and Mark Gatiss created the show after long discussions about Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories during train rides from London to Cardiff during the production of *Doctor Who*. The series co-stars Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as Dr. John Watson. While it is too soon to tell how influential the series will be in the long run, it has proved extremely popular and is widely considered a great success, having launched major film careers (starring roles in a *Star Trek* film and the *Hobbit* franchise respectively, just to name two) for its two stars.

The primary innovation of the show is its contemporary setting, a rather ironic innovation given that every pre-WWII adaptation except for the 1939 Rathbone films was updated to a modern setting. However, the shadows of both the Brett series and the 1939 Rathbone films (despite Rathbone's having made another eight Holmes films with modern settings) are evidently long; there seems to be little popular memory of Holmes as anything other than decidedly Victorian. The series highlights the use of post-millennial technology; Sherlock is addicted to his smartphone and frequently uses it to find background information (such as the weather in Cardiff) upon which to base his

deductions, for example, and John writes a blog rather than publishing articles as did Doyle's Watson.

My analysis will focus on series one and two, as series three had not yet been released during the writing of this research. Unlike many of the other adaptations, *Sherlock's* first episode, "A Study in Pink", a retelling of the Doyle story "A Study in Scarlet", does not open with the inciting incident of a murder or other crime that will serve as the case for the episode. Instead, we see John Watson (Martin Freeman) tossing in bed in the throes of a nightmare/flashback of combat in Afghanistan. We then cut to John talking to his therapist, who is encouraging him to write in his blog as therapy. This opening signals that this iteration of Sherlock Holmes is as much about Watson and Holmes as it is the mysteries they solve and that it is very definitely set in the 21st century. The credits roll and then the episode provides a glimpse of the crimes that will be solved. The case here concerns a cab driver who is playing (and winning) a suicide game with victims chosen at random. At the episode climax, he challenges Sherlock to play but is shot dead by John before Sherlock can accept the challenge. The case, however, is merely the pretext establishing and developing the relationship between Sherlock and John.

Several scenes take place before we are introduced to Holmes, including John's nightmare and therapy session, the first murder, and then a police press conference discussing the crime. Sherlock does make an appearance at the press conference but it is only through the text messages he sends to reporters that declare the police to be "WRONG". This establishes him as "young"-ish, good with computers but not good with people, or not the police at any rate. The first look at his face is upside down, through an

unzipped body bag from the point of view of the corpse, another indication of his being at odds with the conventional. After Molly (Louise Brealey) mentions that she knew the corpse in question, who was "nice", Sherlock then performs experiments in bruising on the corpse by beating it rather viciously with a riding crop. Molly asks him out on a date for a coffee, which he willfully misunderstands as an offer to bring him a cup of coffee. All of this establishes him as alien and alienated from those around him. There is no evidence in these first scenes of warm relationships between Sherlock and anyone else.

When he meets John through a mutual acquaintance, he immediately shows off his detective talents and assumes that John is a prospective flatmate. John is left puzzled and amused but he can no longer say, as he did to his therapist in the opening that "nothing ever happens" to him. When he goes to see the flat in question, the fabled 221B, he says that it could be quite nice it were tidied up a bit. Unfortunately, the mess is Sherlock's things, which he has already moved into the flat. This disorder will be the continuing state of the flat, a jumble



**Figure 7 - Martin Freeman in 221B, complete with science experiments**

of papers, science equipment, and peculiar odds and ends, including a skull that Sherlock

says is his friend and a knife stabbed into some envelopes on the mantle. The flat itself is reasonably well-kept but Sherlock's residency turns it into a den of eccentricity, far more so than any of the earlier adaptations analyzed here. This is not the flat of a bastion of order.

Likewise, this Holmes is quite cut off from the community. Sherlock does not go out of his way to make friends. He takes the slight eccentricity of earlier incarnations and turns it into something just short of a personality disorder. He is intentionally rude to the detectives who bait him, calling them out on their secret affairs, and often has difficulty reacting to situations in a typical way. As the series progresses, John begins to tell him when he has stepped over the line of common etiquette with a murmured, "That's a bit not good." No earlier adaptation has Holmes so inept at human communication that he must rely on Watson to give him pointers.

While Sherlock does have a wide acquaintance, running into someone he knows practically everywhere he goes, these connections are almost exclusively former clients. Rather than private clients from the community, as in most of the cases in the earlier adaptations, most of his cases are consultations for either the government ("A Scandal in Bulgravia") or the police (with the sole exception of "The Hounds of Baskerville", which is indeed a private case). In contrast to our earlier Holmeses, who were friendly with members of the community and obtained cases through knowing the people involved before the crime occurred, this Holmes is very much a loner and eccentric to the point of being called a freak and a sociopath by the detectives with whom he works. All his connections are professional rather than private.

However, as Marinaro & Thomas write, despite his connections with



governmental agencies, his relationships with them are strained. Sherlock is detached "from the public institutions of social order – the government and the police force" (2012, p. 73). While he and Detective Inspector Greg LaStrade (Rupert Graves) seem cordial enough in a professional way, Sherlock's visit to the first crime scene makes it very clear that he is at odds with the forensics expert and many of the other detectives, whom he liberally insults. In "A Study in Pink", LaStrade stages a drugs bust of Sherlock's flat to blackmail him into surrendering evidence in the case. LaStrade is pleasant enough - if exasperated – during the raid, but these are hardly the actions of a friend. Likewise, when Mycroft asks Sherlock to take on the Bruce-Partington case as a matter of national security in "The Great Game", Sherlock scoffs, and later mocks John as "quaint" for caring about "Queen and country". Sherlock is much more concerned with his own intellectual gratification and interest in the Moriarty case than in the idea of a duty, either familial or patriotic, to solve Bruce-Partington. Marinaro & Thomas note that "Holmes' antisocial behavior, his self-absorption, and his general lack of emotion suggest a kind of anti-heroism, if the anti-hero is defined in terms of a refusal to subscribe to the socially appropriate path of dedicating one's life and talents to the service of community or country" (2012, p. 73).

In addition to destabilizing Sherlock's position as the "good guy" or "hero" and the upholder of law and order, these 21st century adaptations destabilize the law itself as an instrument of justice. The government and the legal system are shady institutions in *Sherlock*, susceptible to manipulation, corruption and just plain being wrong. Mycroft Holmes (Mark Gatiss) is Sherlock's older brother and a high-level but shadowy official in some capacity of the government, who is able to turn London's ubiquitous closed circuit

security cameras to his personal use. He uses the cctv to intimidate John and surveil Sherlock throughout the series, since Sherlock will not willingly tell him anything about his life. He tortures Moriarty in "The Reichenbach Fall" (uselessly, it turns out) after detaining him illegally, only managing to provide Moriarty with information on Sherlock's childhood to use in his plots. In "The Hounds of Baskerville", the government is sponsoring secret experiments with weaponized hallucinogenic drugs at a super-secret test facility, which is the ultimate source of the stories of the demonic hound. The police are often bumbling to one degree or another, with LeStrade as the least incompetent, and the detectives often resist or outright refuse Sherlock's conclusions, which are always proved right. All of these incidents are illustrative of an official establishment that is not fully under control and cannot be fully trusted. If checks and balances to power ever existed, they have certainly fallen apart. The extraordinary individual, in the person of Holmes, is the only remedy for the lack of trustworthy institutions. As Kord and Krimmer write, this is the common trope in the cop/action genre. "Again and again, personal growth renders structural change unnecessary. . . . [P]olitics gives way to psychology and structural problems are translated into personal motivations and aspirations" (2011, p. 8). Interestingly, the distrust of institutions is somewhat mitigated in our last text, although the emphasis on personal responsibility to the exclusion of examining institutional issues is not.

***Elementary*, 2011-ongoing. Television series produced by CBS Television. Starring Jonny Lee Miller as Holmes and Lucy Liu as Watson. Season one episode one "Pilot", episode four "Rat Race", episode seven "One Way to Get Off", episode nine "You Do It To Yourself", episode ten "The Leviathan", episode sixteen**

**"Details", episode seventeen "Possibility Two", and episodes twenty-three/twenty-four "The Woman/Heroine".**

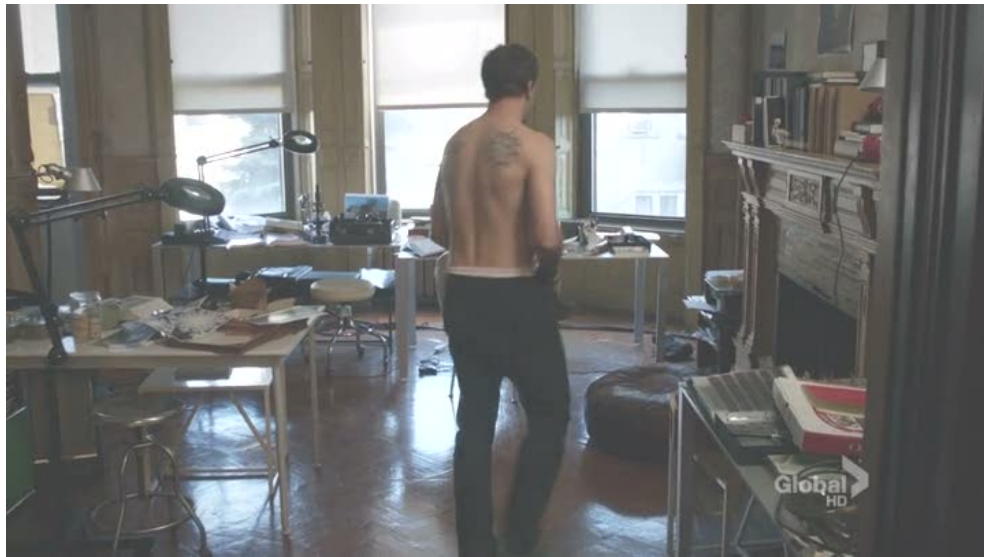
*Elementary's* premise is fairly unique in that it features a female Joan Watson (Lucy Liu) and it is set in New York City rather than London. Jonny Lee Miller plays Sherlock Holmes, an English consulting detective who suffers twin addictions to stimulants and heroin. After hitting bottom in London, he is sent by his father to a high-end rehab near New York City. Once his treatment is complete, he moves to the city to resume his consulting work and is joined by Lucy Liu's Joan Watson, a former surgeon now turned sobriety companion. Joan has quit medicine because of an accident that led to a patient's death and took up work with drug addicts due to her experiences with the addiction of a former lover. Her mission at the beginning of the series is to help Sherlock stay sober for the six weeks of her contract (paid for by Sherlock's absent but wealthy father) but by the end of the first season she ceases to be his sober companion and officially becomes his apprentice in detection. The cases of each episode are original (i.e. not adaptations of Doyle) but small details connected to the Doyle canon are scattered throughout. Holmes is friendly with and consults for the NYPD, dealing most often with Captain Toby Gregson (Aidan Quinn) and Detective Marcus Bell (Jon Michael Hill). For most fans, the developing, platonic relationship between Holmes and Watson and the slow reveal of both characters' backstories are the substance of the series while the cases themselves are mostly a device on which to hang the more important personal elements. The show has been praised for its inclusion and handling of minority, female, and transgender characters and was one of the highest rated new programs for the fall of 2012. It finished its second season run in May 2014 and has been renewed for a third

starting in the fall of 2014. This thesis will focus on the first season only, as the second season was just being released during the writing of this research. Like *Sherlock*, *Elementary* offers a Holmes carrying a significant amount of personal and interpersonal damage, though unlike Cumberbatch's Holmes, Miller's is actively attempting to solve himself in addition to the mysteries he comes across. As the primary premise for the series concerns Holmes' recovery from addiction, his personal flaws are a crucial aspect of the first season and all those flaws boil down to a disorderly personality and a lack of control over himself. Polasek suggests that "the series represents an antihero attempting to navigate his own deep flaws" (2013, p. 291). As such, the show always constructs his flaws and the disorder that flows from them as being negative and harmful to both his well-being and his ability to do his job. As we have seen in other texts, detection of crime is the correction of disorder into order, but Holmes' addiction (and the personality flaws of impulsivity and unrestrained emotionality that come with it) leaves him drowning in disorder to the point that he becomes "a shambles of a man" as he explains in the episode titled "M.". He tells Joan Watson, "Ten years ago when M. first started killing, I was an integral part of the investigation. By the time he had claimed his thirty-sixth life, however, my addiction was out of control. I was, I'm quite embarrassed to say, useless to the police." Instead of talking about damage to his family and friends, or his health, or even having destroyed the career and reputation that he spent years building, Holmes focuses on his utility as an investigator; his addiction is shameful because it means that he cannot be useful in restoring order. He has failed (rather spectacularly, in fact) to live up to the hegemonic masculine ideal of total self-control. This ideal is based in the masculinity developed at the same time as the character of Sherlock Holmes

himself. As April Toadvine writes, citing Richard Altick's *Victorian People and Ideas*, that masculine ideal "put high value upon such qualities as frugality, self-denial, dedication to one's appointed occupation" (2012, p. 50). Holmes' addiction meant that drugs were controlling him, rather than him controlling himself and his world.

Thus, almost by definition, addiction is disorder. *Elementary* addresses this explicitly and repeatedly. In "Rat Race", the case Holmes is investigating involves a murder by heroin overdose, heroin being one of his drugs of choice. The body is found in an expensive, immaculate apartment and Sherlock says that it is too clean to belong to a heroin addict. He says, "Heroin users are looking for oblivion. They want the drug to dull their senses. That's why when they overdose, usually you find them in squalid apartment or alleyways." The obvious implication here is that this was the chief attraction for Holmes, whose too-sharp senses and intellect make everyday life both stiflingly boring and also painfully sharp. This comes up again in episode twenty-three/twenty-four, "The Woman/Heroine", when Moriarty says that only she understands how painful it is to have the meaning of everything be so achingly apparent. Once Sherlock believed that his beloved Irene had been murdered, the pain of that grief on top of the existential torture of his too-keen senses became too much for him to manage. Solving puzzles was no longer distraction enough and he fled into the oblivion of heroin.

Interestingly, though, the newly-sober Sherlock still has a taste for environmental disorder. When he first meets Joan, he acknowledges that the brownstone where he lives is "the shoddiest and least renovated" of his father's five properties in New York City and that it is rather a mess.



**Figure 8 - Jonny Lee Miller in *Elementary*'s New York City brownstone**

"Yuck! I can't wait for you to tidy it," he tells her, with some sarcasm as a dig at her professional status as a sober companion – cleaning the house being obviously menial work outside the boundaries of her job description. By episode eleven, "Dirty Laundry", there are no clean mugs or dishes for Joan to use in making tea. She suggests that he clean it and he says that it is her kitchen too. She disputes this, saying that her contract as a companion will be over in ten days, thus it is clearly his kitchen. Then he tries a different tack, saying that the mess is the sign of an active mind, citing Lincoln, Einstein, and Freud as fellow mess-lovers. He says, "Without Andrew Fleming's reluctance to wash petri dishes, the world wouldn't have penicillin." Joan answers, "Since the world does, you don't need to grow it in your fridge." The show constructs this common parallel between disorder and creativity as false and immature. Joan is no less capable a detective for being neat, and as the series goes on (and Joan becomes his permanent roommate), he acquiesces to the sharing of chores and the kitchen is shown as being tidy thereafter, though the brownstone's actual condition, including flaking paint on the walls, does not improve. Unlike in *Sherlock*, where Sherlock's disordered habits do seem to be

a function of his genius, *Elementary* belies this. Miller's Holmes' effectiveness as a detective does not decrease as the various indicators of his maturity (including neatness) increase; rather, stability and emotional maturity are shown to be necessary for optimum effectiveness both as a detective and as a human being.

The most important marker of this maturity is his impulsivity and emotional volatility. In episode one, he is extremely impulsive. He borrows Joan's car and intentionally smashes it into the car of a suspect because he is frustrated that he knows the man is guilty but cannot yet prove it. He shouts at a crime victim for protecting her attacker, to the point that Joan orders him out of the room to wait in the car. Afterward he tries to pretend that it was all a ruse to entice a confession to Joan, but Joan calls his bluff on this and he admits that he simply lost his temper. In episode two, "While You Were Sleeping", he sets fire to a violin that Joan found in a closet because he feels that she has violated his privacy. In episode seven, "One Way to Get Off", he sulks and gives Joan the silent treatment because she discovers some personal information about his past. When she confronts him about his childishness, he admits that sulking is not the most adult way to handle his relationships and then promptly ditches her to go to a crime scene without her. Nearly every episode has some example of childish or impulsive behavior on his part, and the implication is that this impulsiveness is part of what led him to his problems with addiction in the first place. Polasek writes, "The relationship between Holmes and Watson as an unstable child and a responsible adult is overtly embedded in *Elementary*. . . . [As a sober companion] she literally becomes a parental surrogate" (2013, p. 302).

This lack of self-control is very different than the controlled, rational-to-a-fault

Holmes of other adaptations, but it is part of a trend toward increased disorder in male heroes over time. Part of this is related to the breakdown of the long-standing ideal of hegemonic masculinity that began in the 1970s. Philippa Gates quotes Ian Craib, "Whereas masculine qualities were once seen as normal and good they are now seen as politically and morally wrong, as perhaps in crisis, and as damaging for all concerned (724)" (2006, p. 28). As Gates notes, qualities once associated with femininity, such as emotionality, are now required as part of contemporary masculinity. However, interestingly, in *Elementary* all of the self-control and containment are Joan Watson's, a former surgeon (a traditionally male profession) turned sober companion (a female, nurturing profession that deals heavily with emotion) turned apprentice-detective (another traditionally male province but one that requires a great deal of emotional management skill because she must manage Sherlock). Sherlock needs Joan, not only for nurturance and help in managing his addictions, but also as a sounding board and co-detective. In episode sixteen, "Details", he says, "I'm better with you, Watson. I'm sharper, more focused."

This complexity in their relationship and gender roles reflects a slowly-dawning diversity that is beginning to become acceptable in expressions of both masculinity and femininity. And while greater emotionality of Miller's Holmes makes him disorderly and volatile, it also has a more positive side in his much greater empathy towards the victims of crime and societal underdogs. In episode three, "Child Predator", he is clearly quite worried about the kidnapped child victim and completely focused on solving the case – not as a puzzle but out of a need to save the endangered child. In episode six, "Flight Risk", he says that he owes the families of the victims of the plane crash an explanation



of what happened and why, despite Joan's suggestion that this kind of work is not exactly in his purview. In episode seven, "One Way to Get Off", he is visibly distraught to find a victim of sex trafficking being held in a secret basement room. He holds her gently and murmurs reassurance in Russian (her native language) after freeing her. It is impossible to imagine Cumberbatch's Sherlock demonstrating such care and connection to other people, particularly strangers, and earlier adaptations – though perhaps somewhat kinder than Cumberbatch's curmudgeon – never expressed such strong emotion. This corresponds to Gates' findings that "positive masculinity is no longer defined as necessarily active and muscular, but can be passive, boyish, spectacular, and more driven by brains than brawn" (2006, p. 41).

These shifts in masculinity also erode the loneliness of the detective figure, as an ability to exist in and value community has come to be more valued. In the past, "the price for the ability to think like a criminal and to commit violence like a criminal is, like a criminal, to be distanced from 'good' society and the benefits of that society, including community, marriage, and family: [the hard-boiled detective] remained – like the frontiersman – a lone hero" (Gates, 2006, p. 85). We see this shift in our adaptations, as the 1930s adaptations with detectives firmly ensconced in the community give way to more isolated figures then slip back to a greater connection to community again with *Elementary*. The show consistently marks Sherlock's view of himself as singular and alone as both pathological and not factually correct. He has multiple random connections throughout the season, both people whom he knows through his detective work (like his homeless network in episode twelve), but also those he knows through hobbies (like his conspiracy theorist friends in episode eleven, Edison, the bee-keeping gardener, at his

rehab in episode seven, and Alistair, the actor who has coached him in dialects since Sherlock was a teenager in episode six). Joan encourages these connections and he begins to connect to the twelve-step community as well as he continues to go to sobriety meetings. At the beginning of the season, he is quite resistant to these meetings, complaining about going and dozing off during the meetings with his eyes open in episodes two and three. However, by episode fifteen, he has begun to speak in meetings and to pay attention to the other participants. He obtains a sponsor (Alfredo (Ato Essandoh), an African-American car thief-turned-car security consultant) in episode eight, again with complaints at first but by the end of the season he has begun to turn to Alfredo for advice on occasion, as well as advanced instruction in defeating car alarms. The show constructs this community as healthy and appropriate, something that Joan tries to nurture. And of course, his reliance on Joan as his full partner, along with his (generally) good relations with the NYPD, also make it clear that he is both more mentally well and more professionally effective in the context of these communities.

Despite his mercurial temperament and the various elements of disorder that align him more with more negative discourses around masculinity, however, as his embedding in various communities makes clear, ultimately this tattooed and frequently-shirtless Sherlock is a representative of and instrument for order and the status quo. Gates writes, "the hero of the detective genre struggles between the two opposing forces of social conformity and independence; he must assert his independence as a hero while working within the boundaries of the law and often within the bureaucracy of a law-enforcement institution like the police force or the FBI" (2006, p. 35). In *Elementary*, the surface appearance of rebellion and individuality – the tattoos, the impulsiveness, the scorn for

societal conventions and politeness – is a cover for Sherlock's ultimate status as a symbol of order, as "the person who shows that society is capable of policing itself" (Toadvine, 2012, p. 61). From the beginning, Miller's Holmes is associated with order, more so than Cumberbatch's. He treats Captain Gregson with respect, even reverence, from the first episode (based on working with him off and on for years through Scotland Yard) and states in episode two that he knows that Gregson would never allow his people to contaminate a crime scene. While sometimes gruff or insulting to some of the younger officers, he becomes more polite to Detective Bell (Gregson's protégé) as the season wears on and Bell proves his intelligence. The more authority police officers hold within the force, the more likely Sherlock is to be polite and well-behaved (at least until they prove themselves to be worthy of his scorn), which ties him more closely to authority than if he associated more with the uniformed officers, for example. In episode twelve, Gregson makes it clear that he holds Sherlock to at least some of the code of conduct that applies to officers, in that he is very angry with him for taking the law into his own hands. "He may not be a cop," says Gregson, "but he's been around law enforcement long enough to know that he can't take the law into his own hands." It is clear that Gregson feels that Sherlock breached his trust, though Gregson never seems too concerned with Sherlock's methods when he enters an apartment without a warrant, for instance. The show makes it clear that Sherlock has the advantages of both worlds, as it were, affiliated with the police but not entirely bound by their regulations. This allows him to collect information that is not available to the NYPD detectives like Bell and Gregson.

*Elementary* is typical of detective shows in that it "assures audiences that there is

a hero who can restore order or normalcy to [society]" (Gates, 2006, p. 171). Even when the police themselves are corrupt, it is because of an individual "bad apple" rather than a systemic problem. As Riley writes, detective stories often "eschew social explanations for crime in favor of individual ones" (2009, p. 908). We see this in episode seven, as Sherlock discovers that Captain Gregson's old partner planted fingerprints at a crime scene to ensure the conviction of a suspect she was sure was guilty. Sherlock uncovers the deception but proves that the suspect was indeed guilty and the corruption is simply swept under the rug. Proper procedure and civil liberties are completely beside the point here. What matters is that the guilty have been, and will continue to be, punished. This is in accordance with a more traditional hegemonic masculinity, as Joan Mellen explains. "Strong males, say these [narratives], correctly place law-and-order before civil liberties" (1977, p. 129). We see this with Sherlock's many instances of lock-picking to enter without a warrant, his use of occasional violence (episode twelve) and more frequent blackmail via threatening to release certain information if a person of interest does not provide additional information, and his embrace of the surveillance state (in placing cameras in his home that Joan does not know about in episode twelve, and using extra-legal means to access private computerized information in episode twenty-two, for example). While the show's relationship with surveillance could form the basis of an additional thesis, as it is quite complex and interesting, in short for my purposes here, all of this together provides a picture of the least rebellious rebel in history. He is, in fact, far more willing to support and embrace authority's overreaches than Gregson, for one. In episode thirteen, after he has been suspended for stabbing the assassin Sebastian Moran, he asks Watson, "the larger question is how does my suspension benefit the city?

If the role of the public servant is to keep an eye on the greater good, then why keep me from my work? My work is the greater good." This end-justifies-the-means argument always applies to himself as knowing best and being a special case due to his particular gifts. He says he can see that this makes Joan uncomfortable, but she does not articulate why and they do not discuss it further. The closest that anyone comes to challenging Sherlock's argument is Gregson's angry rant in episode twelve, which is delivered not to Sherlock himself, but to Joan. This constructs effective masculinity as being connected to a remarkable level of authoritarianism, in the same way that it was connected to unfettered violence in the 1970s (Gates, 2006; Mellen, 1977; Feasey, 2008). While masculinity may be more diverse in terms of expressing a greater range of emotions and connection with others and communities, it is still irrevocably connected to the status quo and a sociopolitical system that has greater reach than ever before. And, as Gates notes, "these conceptions are still generic and individuals are expected to conform to them just the same" (2006, p. 36).

#### **Chapter Four – "My Friend and Partner": The Holmes/Watson Relationship**

In her article "The Watson Effect: Civilizing the Sociopath", April Toadvine notes that "questions about John Watson, and what to make of him, have continued since the character's introduction" (2012, p. 48). The various adaptations in the Holmes subgenre have answered the question of Watson in different ways, from the much-criticized, highly influential bumbings of 1939's Nigel Bruce to the quiet heroism of 2010's Martin Freeman and the equal partnership and gender switch of 2012's Lucy Liu. As Toadvine says, the relationship between Holmes and Watson "is at the heart of the original stories and essential to the recent adaptations, which focus as much on the relationship as they do on any crime solving" (2012, p. 48). Thus, as Watson shifts, in ways small or large, so too do Holmes and the relationship between them. These generic shifts in the Holmes/Watson relationship illuminate changes in the discourses around constructions of masculinity over time that will be explored in this chapter, which examines 1939's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1968's *Sherlock Holmes*, 1984's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 2009's *Sherlock*, and 2012's *Elementary*. (Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Game of Shadows* (2011), though outside the scope of this project, will be considered in light of the ideas of this chapter in the conclusion.)

Mary Alcaro notes that "the relationship between Holmes and Watson can appear unconventional for a mere friendship, even by 19th-century standards" (2011, p. 2). She concludes that their relationship goes deeper than being mere roommates, extending to Watson's partnership in Holmes' consulting, "not only listening to clients present their cases, but also accompanying Holmes in dangerous situations in which they confront the

criminals" (2011, p. 3). This extraordinary relationship, deemphasized in early adaptations in favour of a focus on the cases themselves, becomes ever-more important in later adaptations, as Toadvine suggests (2012, p. 48). This shift, beginning in the late 1960s, rode the same cultural currents as the rise of the buddy film. Fuchs contends that "the buddy film responded to the political advent of sex and race issues, through Women's Lib and the Civil Rights movement" (1993, p. 196). Fuchs quotes Molly Haskell's book *From Reverence to Rape* (1987) that "with women increasingly omitted from movie plots . . . men could live out relationships and feelings that had remained below the surface" (1993, p. 196). The Holmes/Watson relationship predated the buddy film but provided an excellent opportunity to retool Sherlock Holmes to take advantage of the trend, with its pre-existing strong male friendship and convenient dearth of important women.

Discourses of masculinity, however, necessitate a tricky balancing act in the buddy film, as Fuchs explains, because while reinforcing a white hegemonic masculinity by presenting a social world nearly absent of women, that exclusion raises the always-terrifying possibility of the masculine discourse of homoeroticism (1993, p. 196). The Holmes/Watson relationship provides a certain amount of cover for these homoerotic discourses through its setting in the more formal, sex-segregated Victorian era. Doyle's canon also offers the possibility of the heterosexualization of Watson at least, through his marriage to Mary Morstan but, interestingly, few Holmes adaptations take advantage of this "beard". It seems that the relationship between the characters is too important and too primary to risk upsetting it with the introduction of a wife.

In 21st century examples of the sub-genre, however, homoerotic discourses seem

to escape their confines and the subtext risks becoming text, partly through a greater cultural awareness and acceptance of homosexual relationships and partly through audience sophistication in regards to buddy film tropes. BBC's television series *Sherlock* makes jokes about Holmes and Watson's relationship in every single episode, while constantly insisting on Watson's heterosexuality. Holmes' sexuality is allowed to play out more queerly, though he is constructed as asexual rather than gay, thus avoiding that unseemly Holmes/Watson homoeroticism while taking a rather cynical hipster advantage of it (Lavigne 2012).

*Elementary*, on the other hand, eliminates the possibility of homoeroticism by making Watson female, but this raises the specter of a heterosexual relationship between Holmes and Watson, a less subversive option than a close platonic friendship between male and female characters. In its first season, the show avoided a romantic relationship through first the professionalization of their relationship (first as sobriety companion/client and then as protégé/mentor), and in the second by sublimating any attraction into a romance between Joan and Sherlock's brother Mycroft. The producers have made numerous public pronouncements that the partnership will not turn romantic but many shows (e.g. *The X Files*) have made such early claims only to abandon them in later seasons. Not having an answer to this question is one of the disadvantages to writing about a show that is still in production. It will be interesting to see if growing societal acceptance of homosexual relationships will eventually lead to an adaptation that features a canonical, male Holmes/Watson romance. In the meantime, this chapter will begin its analysis by looking at the iconic and often vilified Holmes/Watson relationship as portrayed by Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce.



The comic below by Kate Beaton is a humorous but accurate representation of the feelings of many fans of Doyle's canonical Watson upon seeing Nigel Bruce's Watson in the films that co-star Basil Rathbone. While the largest function of Doyle's originating Watson is to provide a stand-in for the reader to whom Holmes can explain his theories (Gates 2006, p. 15; Toadvine 2012, p. 52), he is at least bright enough to distinguish a clue from his own jar of jam.

*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1939.* Film produced by 20th Century Fox. Starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson.



Figure 9 - from the comic *Hark, A Vagrant* by Kate Beaton

which is sometimes more than can be said for Bruce's Watson. Toadvine further notes that "Conan Doyle's Watson is a man who often is the one Holmes ask to accompany him when there is likely to be a fight. It is clear that he is good in a difficult situation because

of his military experience" (2012, p. 52). Bruce's Watson, on the other hand, runs terrified from the spectral hound in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and is consistently proven to be useless when he proposes deductions to Holmes in both *Hound* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. In *Hound*, when Holmes deputizes Watson to go to Dartmoor in his place – Holmes says he cannot get away because of another case, but in fact he wants the freedom to investigate himself in Dartmoor while disguised – Holmes tells the client to look after Watson rather than the other way around. Holmes keeps his plan to himself and approaches Watson in disguise in Dartmoor; Watson does not recognize him and introduces himself as Sherlock Holmes in an attempt to use Holmes' fame to impress. Watson is wholly the comic relief in these films and one is left wondering why Holmes would want the company of a companion who seems to bring so little to the relationship.

The stark difference between the intellect of Rathbone's Holmes and the buffoonery of Bruce's Watson, however, highlights the limits of acceptable masculine relationships. Victor Seidler writes that men's friendships are formed in a context of competition. "Masculinity is often tied to an internalized sense of superiority, and we often learn to feel superior to other men" (1992, p. 26). He also notes that "to rely upon our friendship is to show that we have failed as individuals to achieve on our own terms. This places friendship in a negative light, and we are led into thinking that asking others to help us is a sign of weakness and reflects badly upon ourselves" (1992, p. 26). In that context, Holmes' relationship with an intellect far beyond his own makes sense, as does his playing up Watson's relative deficiencies in deduction. Even when asking for his help, as when he asks Watson to go to Dartmoor to investigate

without him, Holmes cannot admit that Watson's presence in his life is necessary to him in any way and can only express affection through rough, teasing jokes and outright declarations of superiority. When hegemonic masculinity constructs tender feelings between men as suspect, every friendship is a contest with a winner and a loser. Joan Mellen's work on masculinity confirms this: "most movies portray men in competition with each other, for women, money, status, and power, with the best man, the male hero . . . winning" (1977, p. 10). While Rathbone's Holmes seems completely self-sufficient and the clear winner in the status competition, without Watson he would have no audience for a good portion of his brilliance, at the very least.

However, there is also a sense in which Holmes and Watson's competitiveness is also embedded in rough, somewhat juvenile joking that proves their affection for one



**Figure 10 - Rathbone's Holmes teases Bruce's Watson**

another. Their petty arguments and rough jokes with each other are meant to signal the

intimacy of their relationship. M. D. Lampert quotes the San Francisco Chronicle, "Women know from personal observation in their own homes and offices that it is perfectly OK for one man to look at another man's new shirt and ask the guy if he fell through an awning . . . . Indeed, such comments solidify the friendship" (2006, p. 52). Lampert's research confirms that men's friendly interactions often include insults that friends take as signs of closeness (2006, p. 56). We see this discourse operating in Holmes and Watson's interactions in the 1939 movies, most clearly in the fact that neither Holmes nor Watson are as competitive or uncivil to anyone else in the films as they are to each other. They are close enough to preclude politeness but also close enough to compete. While the Watson/Holmes relationship in these films interests us most here, the narratives themselves focus on the cases to the exclusion of relationships to a large extent, a trend that reverses over time. As we move forward, the Holmes/Watson relationship moves from being background comic relief to being increasingly central and increasingly complicated.

***Sherlock Holmes, 1964-1968. Television series produced by BBC Television.***

**Starring Peter Cushing as Holmes and Nigel Stock as Watson.**

*Sherlock Holmes* retains a fair amount of the Holmes/Watson interaction from the Doyle canon with more of a focus on the relationship than earlier adaptations, though short of the focus of later adaptations. In "The Blue Carbuncle", set at Christmastime, Watson goes to the country for two days and Holmes eagerly purchases tickets for a concert for when he returns. He tells Watson, "I am delighted to see you back; it was lonely here without you." He saves a little deduction game over a lost hat for Watson and compliments him on his correct deductions while still showing off his own greater skill.

Watson gives Holmes a Christmas present of tobacco, which pleases and flusters Holmes, who has no present in return. He replies, "My dear old friend! This is so very kind of you. . . my dear Watson, I am at a loss." Watson answers that it is not like him to be at a loss for words and they both chuckle. Watson insists it's merely a token, to which Holmes responds, "Yes, but I -- I regret that the exchanging of presents at



**Figure 11 - Cushing's Holmes receives a Christmas present**

Christmastime is something about which I am notoriously lax." Watson says, "My dear Holmes, it's of no matter." At the end of the episode, as they head home to 221B Baker Street to eat their Christmas goose after solving the case, Holmes puts his arm around Watson's shoulder's quite warmly. As in the 1939 *Hound*, in "The Hound of the Baskervilles" (a two-part episode comprising episodes four and five), Holmes deputizes Watson to go to Dartmoor by himself to protect their client, Sir Henry Baskerville (Gary Raymond). But rather than telling Sir Henry to look after Watson, Holmes says, "You must take with you a trusty man who will always be at your side. . . . I can say in all

confidence that there is only one man I like at my side when in a tight corner." There's no question of Holmes' genuine regard for his friend nor of Watson's gratification at Holmes' words.

This shift from the friendly competition of 1939 to the more open affection of 1968 arises from the same currents as the buddy film. Cynthia Fuchs explains, "Coming of age during the late 1960s, the buddy film responded to the political advent of sex and race issues, through Women's Lib and the Civil Rights movement" (1993, p. 196). With gender roles beginning to shift and discourses around acceptable masculinities beginning to multiply, *Sherlock Holmes* both reaches back to a Victorian ideal of love between male friends contemporaneous to the source material (Porter 2012, p. 185) and around to the late-sixties tropes of male friendship of its own time period, "pursued without humor and in dead earnest" (Mellen 1977, p. 18). By the mid-eighties, the Watson/Holmes relationship would continue to gain importance, becoming more central to the narrative and also more complicated and intense.

***The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1984-5 (first and second series).***

**Television series produced by Granada Television. Starring Jeremy Brett as Holmes and David Burke as Watson. Series one episodes one "A Scandal in Bohemia" and seven "The Blue Carbuncle" and series two episode seven "The Final Problem".**

As quoted in Chapter Three, Leitch notes that "Brett played [Holmes] as hectic and hectoring, a clinical case of manic-depression who frequently fell into illnesses from which only the challenge of new adventures could rouse him . . . [and] showed Holmes constantly swinging between moody self-absorption and fullthroated ridicule of the

suspect, the police, and even his clients" (2007, p. 225). Crucially for our purposes here, Brett's "histrionic outbursts" allowed the Granada series to "broaden the emotional range of their originals" (Leitch 2007, p. 226-7) and indeed exceed the emotional palate of the adaptations that had gone before. While Cushing's Holmes expanded the possibilities of affection in the Holmes/Watson relationship, the Brett adaptation increased the complication and the conflict in their relationship and added a great deal of weight to the relationship both through Brett's greater emotionality across the board and also through a greater emphasis on Watson through the narrative structure.

Because the Doyle stories are mostly written in first person from Watson's point-of-view, it is rather surprising that this is the first well-known adaptation that makes use of a Watson voice-over. Giving Watson the position of narrator refocuses attention from the case to Watson's words and therefore his feelings about and relationship with Holmes. In this series, the Holmes/Watson relationship is almost always the "B" plot to the "A" plot of the case itself, rather than just comic relief or atmospheric afterthought. It is a dynamic, constantly shifting thing that clearly occupies Watson's attention, at the very least, a good portion of the time.

This is clear from the opening of the first episode, "A Scandal In Bohemia". It begins with Watson (Burke) arriving in a cab in a pouring rainstorm, which establishes Watson as the point-of-view character and the stand in for the audience. Upon entering 221B Baker Street, he talks with the housekeeper/landlady, Mrs. Hudson (Rosalie Williams), about his apprehension regarding Holmes' mood after a two-week absence and his desire for supper – the kind of emotionality and conflict that is seen more frequently in lovers than platonic friends. Watson then enters a sitting room where Holmes (Brett)

is waiting. Holmes has left a syringe in plain view in an open drawer, encouraging Watson to believe, incorrectly, that he has been injecting cocaine, which prompts an energetic lecture from Watson and eventual smug amusement from Holmes. Holmes confesses his misdirection and says, "I trust you enjoyed your week in the country," making it fairly clear that his little trick is a punishment for Watson's leaving him alone. He then says he has no need for cocaine because he has the mental stimulant of a case, instead and draws Watson into the case by explaining what has happened so far and asking for his (inadequate) deductions. The speeches here are overblown and dramatic, closer to the somewhat stilted tone of Doyle's stories than the more naturalistic prose of most television shows, even those set in the Victorian period. Watson and Holmes are prickly with each other in this first scene, evidently because of Holmes' resentment of Watson's abandonment of him. However, once their client arrives, Holmes says that Watson must stay to hear about the case and adds, "I am lost without my Boswell." He produces a gift of cigars in honour of Watson's return, reminiscent of flowers presented to an annoyed girlfriend. Most of the early drama of the episode is about emotional turmoil between the two men, which highlights the importance of the relationship in terms of the narrative itself and also the producer's calculus in terms of the interests of the public.

Interestingly, "The Blue Carbuncle", episode seven, shows much less overt affection between the two men than the 1968 version of the same story. The Christmas setting of the story is much less emphasized in the Brett version, with fewer lingering shots of Christmas decorations and less overt discussion of the season overall. Watson comes in from shopping with several wrapped packages in a stack but does not mention them to Holmes at all and the two





**Figure 12 - David Burke's Watson with the Christmas shopping**

do not exchange gifts as in the 1968 adaptation. There is no discussion of attending the special concert together and the Holmes/Watson interactions are confined to the case and a bit of sniping at each other – far less emotion between them than in "A Scandal in Bohemia".

However, overall, the tenor of the series runs closer to "Scandal" than "Blue Carbuncle", with petty arguments often standing in for warmth and covering fears of abandonment on Holmes' part. The conflict in their relationship covers deep-seated emotional issues between the two of them and goes far beyond the incidental bickering in earlier adaptations, and occasionally breaks out into open emotion and affection. In the final episode of the second series "The Final Problem", Watson closes the episode in voice-over after Holmes' apparent death by confessing, "It's with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by

which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished. I shall ever regard him as the best and wisest man I have ever known."

The larger range of both irritation with each other and affection is symptomatic of a greater latitude of emotion not only acceptable in discourses of masculinity in the 1980s and 1990s, but eventually becoming *de rigueur*. As Kord and Krimmer write, "Even action heroes must now reconcile the sensitivity of the new family man with the violence required for the job" (2011, p. 3-4). In the Brett series, hurt feelings and temper tantrums can be added in to the open affection of the 1968 series because deeper feelings and emotional sensitivity are not only allowed but required to make a man seem like a whole person rather than a simple caricature. That emotional complexity also supports a greater focus on relationships in addition to the case narratives. The Brett series is the first popular Holmes adaptation to focus on the Holmes/Watson relationship to the degree that Holmes fans have generally done since Doyle's time, and this focus also requires more conflict in the relationship to sustain interest.

The Brett series is also the first to present a trend that becomes more and more important in the 21st century adaptations, that of Holmes as having emotional or social deficiencies that require Watson to act as caretaker. This solves the structural problem of why Watson is necessary (other than as a stand-in for the audience and prompter of expository monologues by Holmes) on a narrative level, but it also allows nurturing into the relationship to the exclusion of any women. Some critics have read the "annexation of 'feminine' qualities such as tenderness, gentleness, nurturing, devotion, and so forth [as] a colonization of femininity with the aim of reproducing white patriarchal hegemony" with the ultimate effect of co-opting these qualities by men, while removing

or at least reducing the role of women (Kord & Krimmer 2011, p.39), particularly in "buddy" narratives. It is certainly true that the Brett series is missing major female characters. Women appear as clients and Mrs. Hudson wanders in and out but the series' universe is peopled mostly by men; however, the Holmes universe has always been a largely male domain so the primary change here is not the disappearance of female characters from earlier versions but rather the addition of gentler qualities, particularly in Watson.

Ashley Polasek demonstrates that post-millennial Holmes adaptations have presented Holmes as a "flawed figure whose self-destructive genius must be managed by others" with a "volatility and unpredictability that effectively rehabilitate Holmes from any culturally ingrained perception of the characters as turgid and dull" (2013, p. 392). I would argue that this characterization actually begins with Brett's bi-polar, petulant, quicksilver performance, which is fairly far afield from Doyle's characterization of Holmes as a cold, overly-logical man of science, so inured to emotion that romance holds no appeal to him at all. Brett's performance is so appealing because it addresses changes in masculinity that not only allow but demand a greater range of feeling from men, but it also maintains a somewhat gendered division of labour in that the relationship has a caretaking partner (Watson) and a partner who is cared for (Holmes), with Watson perceived as the more feminine, and secondary, partner. That division becomes more evident with our next text, another extremely successful adaptation - *Sherlock*.

***Sherlock*, 2010-ongoing. Television series produced by BBC Television, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson. Series one episode one "A Study in Pink", series one episode three "The**

**Great Game", series two episode one "A Scandal in Belgravia", series two episode two "The Hounds of Baskerville", series two episode three "The Reichenbach Fall".**

Chapter Three discussed Sherlock's problematic social skills, which I characterized as being just short of a personality disorder. Polasek sees this as part of a larger trend and argues that post-millennial versions of Sherlock Holmes are damaged and childish to the point of requiring management to function. She sees Cumberbatch's Sherlock as destructive to himself and others, displaying "the type of arrogance that one would expect from an incredibly bright teenager who has yet to learn humility and cannot admit that he is ever wrong. This leads Sherlock to play fast and loose with peoples' lives, including his own. In the tense climax of 'A Study in Pink', Sherlock is baited by the villain to gamble his own life simply because he has a pathological need to know that he is right" (2013, p. 390). She argues that Watson's role in all of these 21st century adaptations is to take care of Sherlock, providing an "adult" to ground him and act as an emotional mediator (2013, p. 290). I would argue that the vision of Sherlock as damaged springs from post-atomic distrust of pure logic and science, as well as distrust of the hegemonic masculinity with which such rationality is associated, arising in part from concerns about violence that erupted into the mainstream with the anti-war and feminist movements of the late 1960s. However, these adaptations make use of an expanded palate of emotion available to men by the end of the 20th century to give Holmes a male caretaker in Watson, rather than expanding Mrs. Hudson's role, for example, or providing Holmes with a female love interest. (We will get to how these dynamics play out with a female Watson in the next section on *Elementary*.)

The caretaking role also provides some additional motivation for Holmes to

require Watson in his life. Functionally useless in the earlier adaptations, by *Sherlock*, Watson has come to be so useful that one wonders how Holmes managed to survive before they met. In addition to his emotional labour, Watson's partnership and friendship make Sherlock more effective at solving cases throughout the series, as John provides either a necessary sounding board or professional medical expertise. Gates suggests that "the modern-day sleuth uses science and teamwork to make the law effective in the fight against crime" (2006, p. 285) as opposed to the lone detective of both the early sleuths and their progeny the hard-boiled detective, who used pure wit and then wit and a gun rather than science (2006, p. 85). That change coincides both with the rise of specialized scientific forensic procedures that require a team of experts and the rise of the new masculinity discussed above which permits men a greater range of emotional response and increased sensitivity to others, both of which encourage less isolated individualism and more ability to work in a group. In the earlier adaptations, Holmes is completely self-contained. Though fingerprints, ballistic tests, and other forensic techniques were coming into use in Doyle's time (Gates, 2006, p. 61), Holmes' power comes from collecting data and seeing patterns of similarity through the use of his mind alone (Knight, 1980, p. 79). He needs no help; in fact, the police are often more of a hindrance and Watson seems to be along mostly to keep



Figure 13 - Martin Freeman's Watson examining a victim for clues

Holmes company. Despite Watson's ostensible medical knowledge, Holmes does not ask for his medical opinion or insight into causes of death, etc. His official function seems merely to watch Holmes' brilliance at work and report upon it. In *Sherlock*, however, Holmes explicitly turns to Watson for input on medical aspects of his cases, particularly in terms of examining corpses and offering medical findings on what they see. On their first case together in "A Study in Pink", Holmes asks his opinion on the cause of death at the crime scene, for example. Between his medical expertise and his caretaking abilities, *Sherlock* overdetermines Watson's usefulness to such a degree that he and Sherlock's lives are inextricably intertwined, which raises the inevitable question of precisely how intimate Holmes and Watson really are.



Figure 14 - from the comic *Hark, A Vagrant* by Kate Beaton

Of course, Holmes fandom has a long history of debating the question of the sexual relationship between Watson and Holmes. *Sherlock* textually addresses the question for the first time but seems to vacillate on the appropriateness and possibility of a homosexual attachment. Historically, adaptations have seen the strong emotional attachment between Holmes and Watson as a threat to their masculinity and managed it through sublimation and homosocial triangulation (Alcaro, 2011). *Sherlock* does not take the final step of pairing the two men, but plays with the idea by making jokes in every episode about Sherlock and John's sexual status. People routinely mistake them for a romantic couple, starting in the first episode, with Mrs. Hudson and a restaurateur, and the issue is played both for laughs and for some serious



**Figure 15 - Holmes and Watson on their first date**

drama thereafter. For example, in "The Great Game", John says it will be awkward if anyone finds them undressing together in an abandoned swimming pool. In "A Scandal in Bohemia", John's girlfriend accuses him of being a better boyfriend to Sherlock than to her and Irene says that Sherlock and John are together no matter what John thinks. In "The Hounds of Baskerville", a gay couple who own a bed and breakfast assume that John and Sherlock are also a couple. Lavinge says, "The series brings its queer subtexts to the surface only to disavow them . . . . At the same time, however, *Sherlock* demonstrates a playful willingness to highlight and explore its own 'bromance' tropes, creating a persistent, open tease of queer possibilities" (2012, p. 13). Clearly the issue is no longer so threatening that it cannot be mentioned at all, but it would seem that a canonical relationship between the two is still too outré to contemplate seriously. Evidently, masculinity can be stretched easily to include the high-functioning sociopath, but not the homosexual. Our next text eliminates the possibility of homosexuality between the two by making Watson female, but is no more comfortable with a sexual relationship between regardless. It is a particularly interesting text, not only because of



the gender switch but also because its production overlaps that of *Sherlock* and the producers have been very intentional in differentiating it from its British counterpart.

***Elementary*, 2011-ongoing. Television series produced by CBS**

**Television. Starring Jonny Lee Miller as Holmes and Lucy Liu as Watson. Season one episode one "Pilot", episode four "Rat Race", episode seven "One Way to Get Off", episode nine "You Do It To Yourself", episode ten "The Leviathan", episode sixteen "Details", episode seventeen "Possibility Two", and episodes twenty-three/twenty-four "The Woman/Heroine".**

In addition to the precedent of the cop/action buddy film discussed in our examination of *Sherlock Holmes* and *Sherlock, Elementary* also reacts to the rise of the female detective in the 1990s. "The shift from the 1980s to the 1990s saw the return of several earlier elements of the detective film: a sleuth-like detective but with a focus on . . . crime scene investigation . . . rather than a reliance on the sleuth's intelligence" (Gates, 2006, p. 158). This new emphasis on crime scene investigation at a time when social gains for women and other minorities were being solidified in the culture at large provided an opportunity for women and black men to take on the role of the detective hero (Gates, 2006, p. 181). Like *Sherlock* (and to a lesser extent the Brett adaptation), *Elementary* keeps the Holmes/Watson relationship at the forefront, and it also sheds light on the boundaries of discourses of masculinity, given the centrality of their relationship, by creating a different sort of Watson and therefore a different sort of Holmes, more emotional and impulsive, but like Cumberbatch's Holmes, a damaged man with special gifts but in need of special care.

The classic terms of hegemonic masculinity were defined by Joan Mellen in 1977

as "competitiveness under the guise of silence, solitariness, and freedom from domestic commitments" and she notes that "men with despised 'female' traits, which may mean nothing more than gentleness and compassion for the weak, are scorned as unworthy of their sex" (p. 9). By the time of Miller's Holmes, we see the vestiges of this discourse mixed with expanded boundaries that allow him emotionality and impulsivity, but at the cost of being a mature adult. *Elementary's* Joan Watson is level-headed, practical, unflappable, and rational, (all stereotypically male traits) but also good at communicating and discussing emotions, particularly those of her clients in her sobriety companion practice. In contrast, Sherlock is less able to talk openly about his feelings than Joan Watson, in part because of the greater psychological complexity the character is granted by his backstory of an absentee father and history of drug addiction. This complexity can be seen as a semantic change allowed by shifts in the dominant discourse of masculinity over time. As Gates notes, 21st century men are "expected to exhibit, to some degree, the qualities associated with traditional masculinity – strength, heroism, virility, and violence – and yet also the qualities previously associated with femininity – emotional vulnerability, parental affection, and romantic tendencies" (2006, p. 29). The depth of Sherlock's feeling and his impulsivity make it difficult for him to express himself verbally but the narrative allows him strong emotions that he expresses through actions instead. Polasek writes, "Unlike Cumberbatch's sociopathic Sherlock, actor Jonny Lee Miller's Sherlock Holmes is a more emotional being. During the course of the pilot, he seems to empathize with victims, he becomes easily enraged, he offers a sincere apology to Watson, and he even crashes a car in what amounts to a simple temper tantrum" and notes that in bottoming out in his addiction, Holmes has realized he is not a machine after

all (2013, p. 391).

For example, in "You Do It To Yourself" (episode nine), Watson's addict ex-boyfriend Liam (Adam Rothenberg) shows up to ask for help with a hit-and-run arrest. At the end of the episode, Watson offers to help him check in to a rehab clinic and waits at the clinic for his arrival. Sherlock comes to the clinic without being asked and sits on the bench next to Watson in silent support. The last shot of the episode is of the two of them in profile, sitting together, waiting on a hard bench in the silent clinic lobby for someone they both know is not coming.

In the next episode, "The Leviathan" (episode ten), Watson's mother invites her to a special family dinner where Joan's brother Oren is going to introduce a new girlfriend to the family. Holmes notes that she's dressed like she's going to a job interview rather than a family get-together. Watson admits that her mother is less than pleased with her change in careers, from surgeon to sober companion, which her mother calls "babysitting" addicts. Later that night, Watson arrives at the restaurant for the gathering to find that Sherlock, who had not actually been invited, is already there. He is unusually charming to her family and tells them stories from



**Figure 16 - Jonny Lee Miller's Holmes at the Watson family dinner**

his consulting work, including the case from episode four, calling Watson "instrumental" to solving it. He tells them that she saved his life during that case and calls her "quite a promising detective in her own right." Regarding her work as a sober companion, he says, "She practices quite a unique specialty, your daughter. She rebuilds lives from the ground up. You can measure her success in careers restored. In my case, criminals caught and in lives saved." Her family is impressed by this. Afterwards, Watson thanks him for helping her family to understand her work and he answers, "I know my audience. I simply told them what they wanted to hear. They're nice people, your family, but they are, at their core, conventional. You make an effort to appear conventional, but I know, Watson, you share my love of all that is bizarre and outside the humdrum routine of ordinary life. Your family will never understand this, so I gave them some words that they would understand." Although Sherlock will not admit that his compliments were sincere, his actions are proof of his feelings for Joan, and he trades his previous compliments for a new one, more meaningful to him – that, like him, she is extraordinary. This is a contrast to the 1968 adaptation, in which Holmes can express his

appreciation for Watson verbally without hesitation but which never shows the two of them working through emotional issues together or providing a level of comfort to one another that would indicate a real emotional intimacy but also a lack of emotional control.

Earlier adaptations tend to use insults as evidence of male emotional intimacy, as in Rathbone's *Hound*, when he expresses his concern about Watson's well-being by teasingly telling their client to look after him. *Elementary*'s Sherlock, in contrast, is usually insulting as an expression of legitimate conflict. In the pilot episode, Sherlock, annoyed that his father has saddled him with a sober companion without his consent, refers to Watson's job as being "a glorified helper monkey" and tells Captain Gregson that she is his "personal valet". He tells her, "The simple truth is, I don't need you. I'm finished with drugs. I won't be using them again. My advice? Take a six-week holiday. I promise I won't tell Papa." He deduces that she is no longer a surgeon because she made a mistake that cost a patient his life and throws it in her face, which causes her to resign as his companion. After this argument, he interrupts her at the opera and insists that she leave to help with his case. However, her resignation is the turning point in their relationship and he is never again so dismissive of her. The only other time he is impolite to her to this degree is when he is genuinely angry with her for something she's done.

This occurs in "One Way to Get Off" (episode seven). In episode six, Watson snuck away to interrogate a friend of Sherlock's about him without asking his permission. She discovered that the downward spiral that led to Sherlock's trip to rehab was due to someone named Irene, but his friend did not know any more about the situation than that. Sherlock finds this insultingly intrusive and spends most of the episode in a snit. He will

not speak to her unless she speaks to him first and he ditches her to go to the crime scene by himself. When they reunite that afternoon at Sherlock's brownstone, he says that he sent her a text every two hours with his location after he ran away, and left some urine (for drug testing) in her room, to which she replies, "Tell me it's in a cup." However, he puts what he terms "their differences" aside for the good of the case, and forgives her when she returns some letters from Irene that she was given by a friend of his at the rehab. She says that she did not read them but she would be happy to discuss Irene when he is ready. After this reconciliation, he stops needling her and at the end of the episode he confesses to Watson as she is heading upstairs to go to bed: "She died. We were quite close. I did not take her passing well. Good night." This change from the insulting banter of earlier adaptations -- which is also consistent with the banter of the partners in the buddy film -- to more honest emotional responses coincides with a shift in the dominant masculine discourse. Gates notes:

the early 1990s experience a shift to 'sensitive men' which was mirrored in the detective film by the [re]appearance of protagonists who were defined by brains instead of brawn . . . in a negotiation of broader social change and the appreciation of a thinking, feeling and more sensitive masculinity over the muscle-bound, violent masculinity of . . . the 1980s. (2006, p. 157)

Kord & Krimmer write that "the contemporary male hero is defined by his ability to negotiate contradictory identities imposed by conflicting social roles" (2011, p. 3). This explains Miller's Sherlock's simultaneous ability to be more expressive, less emotionally controlled, than his earlier counterparts and also still completely dysfunctional in actually

communicating in an adult manner. A contemporary masculine hero is defined by his ability to "navigate between the threat of betrayal and the challenge to trust, between the splendor of heroic individualism and the need for cooperation and community, between killing and caring" (Kord & Krimmer, 2011, p. 5).

In addition to the new masculine paradigm, the issue of Watson's gender does come into play. Lampert writes that "Harris and Knight-Bohnhoff (1996) found that both men and women perceive seemingly aggressive acts more negatively when perpetrated by a man toward a woman" (2006, p. 56). While Joan and Sherlock banter more than their predecessors, both in terms of time spent per episode and episodes in which bantering occurs, their banter does not have the boyish, shoulder-punching feeling of two men. If any insults are exchanged, they are usually from Joan to Sherlock, teasing him gently about his eccentricity. When Sherlock teases her, it is usually in the form of an understated compliment, such as "your deductive skills are not unworthy of further development" in episode four after she has saved his life.

Likewise, Joan's caretaking of Sherlock can be seen as gendered as female, as the helping professions have always been. While explicitly a former surgeon - a male-dominated specialty as opposed to a traditionally more female-dominated one like pediatrics or family medicine - a mistake that killed a patient (for which she was eventually exonerated so that she could continue to practice medicine if she chose to) led her to a less-credentialed, lower-status job as a sober companion, a job that sprang from her experiences in trying to care for an ex-lover who was an addict. As Polasek notes, hired by Sherlock's father, she "literally becomes a parental surrogate. . . . Watson is responsible for being in his company constantly to ensure that he does not relapse into his

drug habit" (2013, p. 392). It is Watson's job to try to help Sherlock grow beyond his addiction and his immaturity, a role that women have been assigned since at least the dawn of the Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House. And if that was where her part in the series ended, the show would be much less transgressive and unusual. However, at the same time that Watson is tutoring Holmes in growing up, he is teaching her to become a detective and his equal partner, rather than just an assistant, which I see as the most drastic generic shift from earlier versions.

This change can be partially attributed to the move toward more of an ensemble understanding of detective work, as discussed in the previous section. As in *Sherlock*, *Elementary*'s Holmes appeals to Watson's medical abilities from the very first episode, when he asks her to confirm to Captain Gregson that his findings about the bruises on a corpse's neck are correct. Watson consults a genetics expert for him in "Possibility Two" (episode seventeen) and Holmes works closely with the NYPD throughout the series. Although he is capable of doing some forensics tests himself -- and does so, particularly when he wants to keep the results private from the police for a time, as in "Details" (episode sixteen) -- he usually lets the NYPD's crime lab and forensic examiner do them. The sense is not that Holmes could not learn to do these things for himself, but that it is expedient both in terms of time and allocation of resources to work as part of a team.

Another factor has to do with the expectations of masculine friendship and the competition we have also looked at previously. In all the pre-millennial adaptations, Holmes frequently invites Watson to make his own deductions about a certain item or event, often with the sense that he is goading a toddler into a party trick rather than genuinely inviting Watson into the case. Rather than being training exercises for an



apprentice, these incidents are just opportunities for Holmes to show how clever he is at Watson's expense. In *Elementary*, by contrast, Holmes never tries to make Watson look foolish or stupid. He comments positively on Watson's deductive abilities from the first episode. In the fourth episode, "The Rat Race", Watson's deductions save Sherlock's life. By episode sixteen, "Details", Sherlock proposes that, rather than moving on to another client as a sober companion, she remain with him as his apprentice. He says:

Allow me to continue to teach you. Assist me in my investigations. In return, you will receive a stipend that will at least equal the salary my father was paying you. . . . This is an important decision and I encourage you to discuss it with others. Explain what you have been to me and what I believe you can be to me. Partner. Lest you think this is an act of charity, a gift from a grateful client, let me assure you it is not. I'm better with you, Watson. I'm sharper, more focused. Difficult to say why, exactly. Perhaps in time I'll solve that as well.

At the end of the episode she accepts his proposal by saying simply, "I like to be paid on Thursdays. And since I don't have an apartment right now, I will stay here rent-free until I find something else. And you will continue going to group support meetings with me for as long as we work together." Holmes replies, "Congratulations on your new career, Watson."

The next episode, "Possibility Two", is a partial demonstration of Sherlock Holmes' School of Deduction. At a crime scene, Holmes instructs Watson to give the police detectives her impressions of the scene. She misses the mark completely and Holmes provides the correct solution to what happened at the scene. As they leave,

Holmes says, "You mustn't allow your failure to discourage you." Watson answers, "Didn't fail. Not discouraged." Holmes continues, "You didn't solve the case, but you did notice the incongruity of the scuff marks. The next step is learning to extrapolate your way to the truth. Detection is not just a skill, Watson. It's a point of view. You must train yourself to be alert to the bizarre, the unusual, that which has no place in any given picture." This attitude is the opposite of the earlier Sherlocks, who seem to think that Watson's failures in deduction are indeed a good reason to be discouraged and who never provide any real instruction on how to do what he does. Miller's Holmes not only provides on-site instruction but also reading material (Jeremy Bentham is mentioned), manufactured exercises in deduction (red paint spatters stand in for blood stains in a faux crime scene) and lessons in single-stick fighting (to which Watson objects but acquiesces). When she draws a correct conclusion at a crime scene, he says, "Kudos, Watson. Adequately done." He gives her a puzzle to solve in the form of a money-laundering dry-cleaners and then gives her space to figure it out on her own. Rather than showing her up with his abilities, he is completely committed to doing his best to teach her to be an independent investigator, and he never asks her to make any deductions herself until she has explicitly become his student. This much more respectful attitude, arising from a more flexible masculine discourse, solves the problem that denigrating a female friend is read culturally as more bullying, and even sexist, than the same behavior with a male friend. And in fact, at the end of the season, the show gives Watson the primary responsibility for defeating Moriarty. It is her idea that leads to Moriarty's arrest, though Holmes carries it through with himself as bait in the trap.

It is worth noting, however, that while Joan Watson is unprecedented as a Watson

who is both female and an equal partner, that possibility rests on the rise of female detectives across the culture. Gates writes, "Surprisingly, the female detective appears alongside her male counterpart early in both detective fiction and film and, in the 1930s, tended to be an amateur sleuth, an undercover agent, or a girl reporter" (2011, p. 9).

From these beginnings as an amateur, female detectives begin to professionalize with increasing frequency toward the end of the 20th century, but even then we often see that "the vast majority of fictional female detectives from 1864 to today, . . . have been forced to make a decision to pursue either love or detection because the two are seen as mutually exclusive – the former requiring the detective to be feminine and the latter masculine" (2011, p. 4). In one sense, combining caretaking duties and professionalism as a detective can be seen as an advance, because Joan is not masculinized by her new profession as a serious detective. There is another sense, though, in which a female character cannot be seen as "feminine" without engaging in such stereotyped behavior as carrying the majority of the caretaking in a relationship. I find it encouraging that *Sherlock's* John Watson engages in a similar level of caretaking, albeit with considerably more resentment and emotional immaturity. While these older discourses of masculinity are still clearly operating, they seem to be slipping more and in interesting ways, as time goes on. As Gates writes, "The detective genre has traditionally been a male-centered one based on the social assumption that heroism, villainy, and violence are predominantly masculine characteristics" (2006, p. 7). *Elementary* refutes some of these cultural assumptions and provides an interesting contrast to its generic ancestors while illuminating the parameters of the current dominant discourse of masculinity.

### **Chapter Five – The Napoleon (or Josephine?) of Crime: Holmes and Moriarty**

Despite appearing in only two of Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories, Sherlock Holmes' nemesis Professor Moriarty has been a popular and frequent addition to adaptations of Sherlock Holmes. While early adaptations tend to portray Moriarty as a skilled opponent but do not draw any particular parallels between Holmes and Moriarty, later adaptations make close connections between the characters that construct the two men as extremely similar, virtually two sides of the same coin. This chapter examines evidence of that shift, moving from the decency and order of the Holmes of the 1930s to *Sherlock's* explicit, textual references to Moriarty and Holmes' similarities, while *Elementary* goes so far as to play with the convention itself, offering a female Moriarty who has less in common with Sherlock than she thinks. The texts addressed are 1939's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1968's *Sherlock Holmes*, 1984's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 2009's *Sherlock*, and 2012's *Elementary*. (Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Game of Shadows* (2011), though outside the scope of this project, will be considered in light of the ideas of this chapter in the conclusion.)

A conflation of hero and villain has been noted as endemic by several examinations of masculinity in popular culture, particularly within the detective genre. Kord & Krimmer's (2011) analysis suggests that the increased emphasis on a Holmes/Moriarty connection is linked to rising anxiety about masculinity and order that began in the late 1960s, the same anxiety that underpins the cop genre's general conflation of the officer and the criminal. They note that "cop-and-killer films of recent decades blur the distinction between the two to a worrying degree. . . . [E]ven films that still that still distinguish between "good" (cops) and "evil" (criminals) tend to establish a

visual "identity" between the two" (pp. 13-14). Often, in fact, it is the hero's similarity to the villain that enables his success. "The detective's knowledge enabled him to pursue and catch the criminals that the police were unable to because . . . they lacked the knowledge of the underworld to which the criminals – and the detective – belonged" (Gates, 2006, p. 85). But while his special knowledge and/or willingness to do violence may allow the hero to triumph, the hero/villain conflation betrays a profound unease with masculinity. As Ian Craib writes, "Whereas masculine qualities were once seen as normal and good they are now seen as politically and morally wrong, as perhaps in crisis, and damaging to all concerned" (qtd. in Gates, 2006, p. 28). Furthermore, "the detective genre has traditionally been a male-centered one based on the social assumption that heroism, villainy, and violence are predominantly masculine characteristics" (Gates, 2006, p.7). When heroism and villainy are both so closely linked to masculinity, and the problems with masculinity have been unmasked by feminism, then both the hero and the villain are exposed as problematic.

Much of the unease around masculinity revolves around constructions of violence as both undesirable and necessary to maintain order. Joan Mellen suggests that by 1977 "the image of maleness in American films [had] evolved to the point where violence is always necessary" (1977, p. 12); however, popular culture's relationship to violence (and indeed, masculinity) continued to evolve. With the rise of feminism, Kord & Krimmer argue, came a more complicated construction of masculinity and violence, if perhaps no less violence in the long run. They write, "the conflicting demands imposed on the new hero call for a skilled negotiation of the interface of masculinity and violence . . . Some films solve this conflict – or obfuscate it, a less optimistic reading might conclude – by

portraying aggression as essentially defensive, the flipside of a man's duty to protect and serve" (2011, p. 4). The texts this chapter analyzes illustrate the change from Holmes adaptations where violence is only ever the purview of the criminal, to *Sherlock's* acceptance of violence as the necessary antidote to evil, to a more nuanced stance that *Elementary* tries to offer as a possible vision of a mature masculinity.

***The Sleeping Cardinal* (USA title: *Sherlock Holmes' Fatal Hour*), 1931. Film produced by Twickenham Film Studios. Starring Arthur Wontner as Holmes and Jan Fleming as Watson.**

*The Sleeping Cardinal* draws no particular parallels between Holmes and Moriarty at all, either by the plot or by any other elements. Holmes is brought in on the case by Scotland Yard after the murder of a guard during one of the break-ins, not because he has any particular knowledge of or interest in Moriarty. As for Moriarty himself, his focus is solely on his own business, upon which Holmes happens to be intruding. The crime is not concocted to get Holmes' attention and does not involve him in any way until the Yard requests his help. Holmes tells Watson that he has been aware of and tracking Moriarty since at least May 1928 (three years prior to the assumed date of the narrative, 1931), and Moriarty acknowledges in their first conversation that he has been seriously inconvenienced by Holmes. However, Holmes does not mention Moriarty as "The Napoleon of Crime" – a rather aggrandizing and frequently-repeated moniker that originates in the one Doyle story wherein Moriarty features significantly, "The Final Problem" – nor as an arch-nemesis or even a particular interest, though he does say that Moriarty is involved "with half the crimes the world over". They have met on only one other occasion. Moriarty does say that he has been annoyed enough by Holmes to

threaten to remove him from the scene by force, but he also says that this would be a "great pity" as he has a great respect for Holmes' "mentality". Rather than the operatic enmity one might expect from a legendary hero and his nemesis, it all seems rather pedestrian and small. Given the nature of the crime, Moriarty seems a prosaic criminal, unusual only in the scope of his ambition and his supposed crime syndicate, only a modest challenge to Holmes' extraordinary abilities. The film does not provide any actual evidence of Moriarty's grand crime network, which undercuts Moriarty's seriousness as a threat.

Moriarty's ordinariness is reinforced by the one parallel that is explicitly drawn in the text – that between him and Watson. The film constructs Watson as a handsome, charming ladies man who is not as clever as he thinks. Early in the film, before Holmes has even made his first appearance, Watson attempts to make deductions about the wearer of a hat in order to impress a young woman; the episode is played for laughs and Watson is shown to be humorously off-base when the owner of the hat comes to collect it. While Watson seems to have Holmes' affection and respect, none of the theories he advances about the case ever prove to be correct. He is a bit of a buffoon, though less so than some later versions. Making an explicit parallel between Moriarty and Watson therefore reinforces Moriarty's status as less than the all-encompassing threat we might expect. The text makes two of these connections in the same scene, one being Holmes' asking Watson if he has a mathematical mind, which Watson affirms as "fairly", prompting Holmes to advise him not to give in to impulses as Moriarty has in visiting him since this seems to be a danger with mathematical minds, and secondly a few lines later when we discover that Watson has his boots made at the same bootmaker as

Moriarty, a key clue that allows them to wrap up the case. Watson is quite distressed by the coincidence of sharing a bootmaker with Moriarty and he protests that his bootmaker is a "respectable tradesman with a high-class clientele". Holmes replies teasingly, "Obviously, obviously. You and Moriarty. . . . For all I know he may be a great friend of yours." The connection between Watson and Moriarty marks Moriarty as a bit bumbling and middle-class, in contrast to the higher-class and definitely more intelligent Holmes. For all the talk of the reach of Moriarty's criminal network and his cleverness, what we actually see is Holmes besting him at every turn. Even silly old Watson escapes from him unharmed, though Moriarty seizes him and ties him to a chair. Watson is untied by Holmes within a few minutes, completely unharmed and only moderately embarrassed.

In addition, though we never see Moriarty in his own clothes, only disguises, he is always dressed as holding a lower position in the social hierarchy than Holmes. He first appears as a blind man, definitely lower class and possibly a beggar based on the cut and condition of his clothes, with dark glasses and a scarf around his face to hide his identity. He uses what seems to be his true voice here, with an English accent but low and rough, without the plummy sophistication of Wontner's Holmes. He growls his way through his lines in an almost animalistic fashion. His second appearance is as Colonel Hemsworth who has been maimed by a tiger in India, a wealthy man, but with a Scottish accent and a missing arm (Moriarty has pinned his arm to his side inside his tuxedo shirt). These disguises' focus on disability would be more interesting and more ironic if Moriarty was demonstrably more powerful in his true guise.

Every comparison between the two men focuses on their differences rather than their similarities. Rather than the mild-mannered academic one might expect as a



mathematics

professor, Moriarty seems most unlike Holmes and most animalistic when he is most himself. At the final reveal, when his disguise is ripped off by Inspector Lestrade's officers and all pretense is discarded, Moriarty attempts to strangle Holmes with his bare hands and shouts that he will destroy him. He seems overcome by emotion and completely irrational, just another low-life criminal that will go to the docks, and perhaps the gallows, due to the "great mentality" of Sherlock Holmes.



**Figure 17 - The inelegant Professor Moriarty**

***The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, 1939. Film produced by 20th Century Fox. Starring Basil Rathbone as Holmes and Nigel Bruce as Watson.**

*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* provides more play between Holmes and Moriarty than *The Sleeping Cardinal* and a vague suggestion of some similarities between hero and villain; little here, however, hints that Holmes has any darkness in him that might blur the lines between himself and the criminal element. His only anti-social

characteristic is his rough joking with Watson, which is always taken as jest. The parallels between Holmes and Moriarty are ironic, perhaps even amusing, rather than emblematic of some deeper resemblance.

Unlike *The Sleeping Cardinal*, which opens with the inciting crime and then does not get around to introducing Sherlock Holmes until fifteen minutes into the film, *The Adventures* opens with Moriarty at his trial and then introduces Sherlock quickly. Moriarty, in true gentlemanly fashion, offers Sherlock the use of his cab and they share a cozy chat on the way to 221B Baker Street, sitting knee-by-knee. Moriarty knows Holmes' address by rote and gives it to the cab driver unprompted, evidence of the personal knowledge he has of Holmes that will allow him to formulate a distraction for Holmes in his plotting. The two trade quips for a few minutes until Moriarty promises "I'm going to break you, Holmes. I'm going to bring out right under your nose the most incredible crime of the century and you'll never suspect it until it's too late. That will be the end of you, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. And when I've beaten and ruined you then I can retire in peace. I'd like to retire; crime no longer amuses me. I'd like to devote my remaining years to abstract science." Moriarty claims to be ready to retire in order to devote himself to science, though he never makes it clear why he must ruin – but not kill, one notices – Sherlock Holmes before he will be free to do so. Indeed, it is not clear how one failure, even a high-profile one, would break and ruin a detective of Holmes' renown. Sherlock accepts Moriarty's warning with an arched eyebrow but no alarm, though he declines to invite him in when they arrive at 221B. This tete-a-tete has more the air of disgruntled academic rivals than of mortal enemies. Many a faculty meeting has proceeded with less civility. Their conversation constructs them as intimates, in similar

lines of work, familiar with each other's addresses and histories, tied together by circumstance and a grudging respect for each others' intellects, despite the fact that they do not like each other very much.

They are clearly equals in terms of class. They are dressed alike in well-tailored suits, with hats and walking sticks, with no compunctions about the cost of a cab, or indeed any discussion of money at all. While funds might be a logical motivation for one more crime before Moriarty's retirement to pure research, he frames it as being about wanting to humiliate Holmes and escape boredom. Not once is money mentioned as even a secondary goal for Moriarty. In fact, the crime he chooses, a burglary of the crown jewels, might be seen as a crime of prestige rather than income, as goods as notorious as the crown jewels would presumably be rather difficult to fence. Likewise, Holmes never mentions charging a consulting fee. Only the wealthy can afford to ignore monetary matters so completely.

After the cab scene, separate scenes at each residence provide information about our subjects' domestic lives which show that the two men are very different indeed, despite their surface similarities of intellect and class. While both spend time on their research projects - Moriarty raises exotic plants while Holmes conducts experiments on the effects of violin vibrations on houseflies - Moriarty bullies, threatens, and terrifies his servants while Holmes has warm, familial relationships with his. Moriarty is probably Irish, based on his name, and has connections to South American assassins who hang around his house playing eerie flute music; these connections to foreign-ness and his admitted criminality make it very clear that Moriarty is purely an agent of disorder. Holmes, on the other hand, is an upstanding Englishman and an agent of order. He is on

good terms with the court, police and the captain of the guard at the Tower of London, who comes to 221B in person to ask Holmes for his help. His eccentricities are gentle, running jokes, just strange enough to be amusing, such as playing violin for flies captured in a sherry glass. As Cawelti notes, Holmes and Watson "embody the combination of solidity, morality, and eccentricity so central to the ideal of the British gentry" (2004, p. 275). His eccentricity is of the wholesome, British sort, confirming his position in the established order rather than connecting him to Moriarty's disorderly, foreignness.

After the initial meeting and the surface parallels drawn and then dismissed between Holmes and Moriarty, we do not see them together again. The final climactic fight on the roof of the Tower of London is between Holmes and one of Moriarty's henchmen rather than Moriarty himself. The last scene of the film is a coda that wraps up any last questions about the case with Watson, with a bonus revisitation of the gag about Holmes' fly experiments.

This lack of personal resolution with Moriarty seems strange from a contemporary perspective because we are so accustomed to a doubling of the hero and villain as the subtext and meaning of our narratives. The issue in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is the puzzle that Moriarty sets for Holmes. Character and subtextual issues that are so important to post-millennial narratives are completely irrelevant. Holmes and Moriarty's roles are straightforward and completely unconfused. Any superficial similarities between the two men are just an ironic, amusing appearance that does not reflect a truth of any kind. The ironic similarity here can be seen as a precursor to the rampant doubling that Feasey (2008) highlights. Clearly, the discourse of the hero and villain sharing traits is beginning to circulate in 1939, while it was absent from *The*

*Sleeping Cardinal* in 1931.

***The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, 1984-5 (first and second series).***

**Television series produced by Granada Television. Starring Jeremy Brett as Holmes and David Burke as Watson. Series two episode six "The Final Problem".**

In keeping with the series' reputation for hewing to the Doyle stories, Professor Moriarty appears in only one episode of the series, series two episode six, "The Final Problem". The story begins with Holmes pursued by Moriarty's henchmen, then backtracks to explain that Holmes has just returned from France, where he foiled Moriarty's scheme to steal the Mona Lisa from the Louvre and then sell multiple forgeries as the real thing. Thereafter, no other case is undertaken. The episode focuses only on Holmes running from Moriarty's attempts to remove him as an obstacle to his crime network and ongoing liberty. The usual criss-crossing of threads and deductions of a case-based narrative are abandoned for a more action-oriented chase that culminates in Holmes' apparent death over the Reichenbach Falls as he grapples with Moriarty.

The episode draws fewer superficial parallels between Holmes and Moriarty than the 1939 *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. While they still appear to be about the same class, upper-middle to lower-upper, with Moriarty wearing a well-cut suit with a silk cravat with pin, and carrying a specialty, silver-tipped walking stick concealing a revolver, other similarities are downplayed or removed. Moriarty's status as a mathematician is not mentioned; no hobbies or research interests come up and he commits his crimes for a clear profit motive, with no sense of prestige or professional pride in besting Holmes entering into it. Unlike the 1939 film, we get no glimpses of Moriarty's domestic sphere. We do not know if he has servants or if the people he

employs have relationships with him. The two rivals meet face to face for the first time in the episode and there is no sense of the collegial enmity of Rathbone and Zucco's chummy cab ride. Like 1931's McKinnel Moriarty, Porter speaks with a low, rough voice that marks him as both criminal and more animalistic than Brett's Holmes. He shouts at Holmes, slams doors, and grunts and growls as they fight at the edge of the Falls at the end. Even the more emotional Brett Holmes never stoops to such indecorousness, and he is silent even while fighting for his life. All these differences mark the two men as being opposites rather than doppelgangers.



**Figure 18 - Porter as the well-dressed but ill-intentioned professor**

Interestingly, along with these marked differences comes a much greater emotional and narrative weight ascribed to Moriarty, more so than in any of the earlier versions. The narrative here revolves not around his schemes but his direct pursuit of

Holmes and culminates in a physical contest for supremacy between the two. Moriarty has a fair amount of screen time. He comes to see Holmes undisguised, makes deals for the forged art directly, rather than using go-betweens, and sees Holmes off to his death himself. The musical cues and Holmes' intense, often anxious or fearful response to Moriarty mark him as a foe worthy of respect. When Moriarty threatens Holmes during their interview, Holmes is defiant but pulls his dressing gown closer around him as though worried. Holmes' hair and clothes become disheveled in the episode-opening pursuit and he searches through 221B for attackers with great, anxious energy. As opposed to the Rathbone Holmes, who never seems to be too worried about catching Moriarty in the end, Brett's Holmes is clearly concerned that Moriarty poses a credible threat to his life, an impression which is reinforced by Watson's emotion-laden voiceovers framing the narrative as concerning an unforeseeable and violent consequence, told for the first time.

All this sets the conflict between Moriarty and Holmes as not only the central story of this episode, but also a crucial episode in the television series overall and emblematic of the relationship between the two characters now enshrined as one of the "most compelling duos in the literature" (Cawelti, 2004, pg. 282) and the exemplars of the trope that "the sleuth [is] often pitted again a criminal who [is] his equal – the same kind of person but from the other side of the coin" (Gates, 2006, pg. 158). For a character who appears in only one of the stories/novels fifty-written by Doyle, Moriarty carries a tremendous amount of emotional, narrative, and cultural weight. Drawing tighter connections between him and Holmes justifies that weight narratively as well as meeting the subtextual needs of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century that

begin to require a doppelganger as an expected accessory for the well-dressed hero.

***Sherlock*, 2010-ongoing. Television series produced by BBC Television, starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as John Watson. Series one episode one "A Study in Pink", series one episode three "The Great Game", series two episode one "A Scandal in Belgravia", series two episode two "The Hounds of Baskerville", series two episode three "The Reichenbach Fall".**

In *Sherlock*, we get our doppelganger with a vengeance. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the first series of the show spends a great deal of effort setting Sherlock up as being difficult to get along with and generally inept at polite interaction due to a combination of not caring enough to bother and occasional, Asperberger's-like, genuine bafflement at social norms. By "The Great Game"(series one episode three), this social impairment becomes more sinister as connection after connection is made between Holmes and Moriarty. During the first forty-five minutes of the episode, a new parallel pops up every two minutes on average. Some of the most prominent ones are Sherlock's keeping a severed head in his (and Watson's) refrigerator for an experiment, refusing to help his brother Mycroft on a case that Mycroft insists is "of national importance" because of their sibling rivalry, shooting holes in his (rented) walls because he is bored, faking tears to extract information from a witness, and stating that it does not matter that a woman's life is at stake in the case because caring will not help and the hospital is full of dying people. All of these details make him seem not only uncaring but alien and even frightening, someone whose motivations and feelings are not like other people's - a sociopath, in other words, which he himself claims to be in the first episode, "A Study in Pink", though he does clarify that he is "high-functioning".



This sociopathy is reflected in both Sherlock and Moriarty's need for extreme mental stimulation. While Sherlock solves crimes to spice up his otherwise-stultifying daily routine, Moriarty commits them, but both of them state outright in "The Great Game" that boredom is a primary motivating factor for the unusual things that they do. In "A Study in Pink", Sgt. Sally Donovan (Vinette Robinson) says "one day just showing up won't be enough. One day we'll be standing around a body and it'll be Sherlock Holmes that's the one that put it there. He's a psychopath. Psychopaths get bored." This opinion is echoed by a fair number of her colleagues, which culminates in Moriarty's ultimate plot against Sherlock in "The Reichenbach Fall", as we will discuss later.

Perhaps the most telling parallel is the fact that Moriarty's first murder was Sherlock's first case, in 1989 when they were both approximately thirteen (based on the actors' birth dates in 1976 per [imdb.com](http://imdb.com)). Though they did not meet in person, this fact has great symbolic resonance; they affected each others' lives from childhood, from the births of their respective vocations. They understand each other's minds better than anyone else and they have ties reaching back into childhood, that eventually culminate in what appears to be both of their deaths. Moriarty is Sherlock's dark shadow, irretrievably connected to him. Kord & Krimmer note that this doubling is common, as many cop films "erode the boundary between criminals and the detective, between illegal and lawful aggression. In a world gone awry, cops are killers, killers escape justice, and sociopathy is a normal human response" (2011, pg. 4).

The problem of differentiating the detective from the criminal is exacerbated in "The Reichenbach Fall", as the parallels between Sherlock and Moriarty come to full fruition in an elaborate scheme to make it appear as though Sherlock has committed all

the crimes he solved in order to take the credit. The episode obviously riffs on the 1939 Rathbone film in having Moriarty arrested and tried only to be released (though due to jury tampering in this case rather than a lack of evidence) and also in arranging a post-trial, faux-social meeting between the hero and villain. Moriarty comes to 221B and Sherlock serves him tea while they have a chat infused with considerably more menace than the cab ride of 1939. Also like the 1939 film, the episode revolves around Moriarty's plot against Sherlock specifically, as opposed to Sherlock happening upon crimes Moriarty commits for financial gain. However, rather than taking the similarities between Holmes and Moriarty as amusing but ultimately unimportant, "The Reichenbach Fall" fully exploits them; they are the focal point of the story. Sherlock, now a media celebrity, is subject to the dark side of the press as the public and Scotland Yard alike begin to believe that he has been committing the crimes he has solved all these years. Moriarty poses as an actor supposedly hired by Sherlock to act the part of his nemesis; he subverts Sherlock's always-shaky relationships with Scotland Yard and everyone around him, though John's faith in him remains strong. The plot requires intimate knowledge of Sherlock's flaws as Moriarty uses Sherlock's poor social skills against him and sets up the appearance of what Sally Donovan has been expecting all along. Moriarty is banking on a police force too pedestrian to distinguish between the merely strange and the actually criminal and too stupid to grasp the amount of work that would be required to fake crimes in order to solve them for decades, but also that the Yard detectives dislike Sherlock so intensely that they will be willing to overlook the inconsistencies in order to take the opportunity to destroy him.

The subtext of the 1939 film is made text – Sherlock and Moriarty are the same.

Throughout, Moriarty explicitly insists that this is the case: "We're just alike, you and I", he says, "Except you're boring. You're on the side of the angels." In their final confrontation on a rooftop, Moriarty despairs that Sherlock has not turned out to be a worthy adversary. "I'm disappointed in you, ordinary Sherlock," he says. He tells Sherlock that three gunmen are in place to kill Watson, Mrs. Hudson and Detective Inspector Lestrade. They will only be called off if Sherlock commits suicide and completes Moriarty's tale of the fictitious detective; the



**Figure 19 - Cumberbatch's Holmes and Scott's Moriarty face off**

destruction of Sherlock's reputation is the most crucial part of the plan to Moriarty, the full transformation of an internationally respected detective into an internationally reviled psychopath – the final, public acknowledgement that Sherlock and Moriarty are the same. Sherlock realizes that this means that Moriarty has a mechanism to call of the assassins and all he has to do is force Moriarty to give it to him. Moriarty says that Sherlock would never be willing to do something drastic enough to make him give up the code. Sherlock disagrees, "I am you – prepared to do anything, prepared to burn, prepared to do what ordinary people won't do. You want me to shake hands with you in hell? I shall not

disappoint you. . . . I may be on the side of the angels, but don't think for one second that I am one of them." Moriarty is convinced enough by this that he thanks Sherlock for proving that they are the same. In the end, they are no longer just alike; they have become the same person. Moriarty kills himself with a shot to the head from Sherlock's gun in order to prevent Sherlock from obtaining the code, and Sherlock jumps from the roof. They end their careers together just as they began them, to all appearances. The ultimate dispensation of the standoff on the roof suggests that Sherlock cannot hope to best Moriarty without both physical and emotional violence; violence and cruelty are seen as necessary and inescapable. Any critique of his methods as being those of the lawless is blunted by the fact that his actions are constructed as being for the common good and the only way that society can be protected from unfettered sociopaths like Moriarty. Kord & Krimmer explain that this is one of the key issues around masculinity being explored in texts like these. "[V]iolence emerges as the crux of masculinity. How can men be both violent and loving, both sociable and competitive? Some films solve this conflict – or obfuscate it, a less optimistic reading might conclude – by portraying aggression as essentially defensive . . . a good man will fight for his family and his country" (2011, pg. 4). Sherlock's violence and cruelty are harnessed to the limited caring and compassion that he can manage and only allow him to be an effective masculine agent of society. However, compassion is what distinguishes him from Moriarty – the only thing that does given that they have been constructed as being so alike. Where Holmes does the things that ordinary people will not do in the service of his loved ones and a stable society, Moriarty does extraordinary things because he is a sociopath, intelligent and bored.

With his admittedly limited compassion as the hero's defining redeeming feature, *Sherlock* addresses the contemporary requirement that men succeed on both the emotional and physical/intellectual levels. Kord & Krimmer note, "Contemporary masculinity is defined by its ability to navigate between the threat of betrayal and the challenge to trust, between the splendor of heroic individualism and the need for cooperation and community, between killing and caring" (2011, p. 5). Sherlock's partnership and friendship with John make him more effective at solving cases throughout the series, as John provides either medical expertise or a necessary sounding board. The domestic arrangements with John and their landlady Mrs. Hudson (Una Stubbs) also seem to provide a home environment that Sherlock enjoys and finds comforting. It seems clear that it is only these connections that allow him to achieve the status of "good" as well as "great", as Mycroft says in the first episode. Without them, Holmes and Moriarty really do become the same person.

However, *Sherlock* does not appear to be completely convinced of the place of emotional prowess in the iconic masculine figure. Both Sherlock and Mycroft speak repeatedly of emotions as unnecessary and damaging to one's ability to act rationally and effectively. Without Sherlock's emotional connections, he would have no need to sacrifice himself at the end of the second season. Sherlock's defeat of Irene Adler (Lara Pulver) in "A Scandal in Bulgravia" is due to her emotional attachment to him. Throughout the series, Sherlock's emotional detachment allows him to see things that other people do not. Sherlock seems to strike a balance between manly dispassion and the barest amount of emotion required to keep him from turning into a monster. Masculinity, the text implies, must be held in check by softer, more feminine emotions or

risk society collapsing into disorder on the one hand, but on the other, it must not be too contaminated by such weakness or the forces of evil will run riot over everything. The fact that this creates a kind of oroborous of masculine rationalization will not be lost on the reader. Our other contemporary adaptation, *Elementary*, at least partially untangles this funhouse of violence, however, in part by introducing more actual female people into the mix.

***Elementary*, 2011-ongoing. Television series produced by CBS Television. Starring Jonny Lee Miller as Holmes and Lucy Liu as Watson. Season one episode one "Pilot", episode four "Rat Race", episode seven "One Way to Get Off", episode nine "You Do It To Yourself", episode ten "The Leviathan", episode sixteen "Details", episode seventeen "Possibility Two", and episodes twenty-three/twenty-four "The Woman/Heroine".**

As the first season of the series progresses, Sherlock's addiction is revealed to have been exacerbated by the death of his lover, Irene Adler (a much-adapted canon character, played by Natalie Dormer), in what seems to be a case-related murder. In the two-hour season finale, however ("The Woman/Heroine"), Sherlock discovers that the mastermind behind Irene's murder and Irene herself are one and the same; she is Jamie Moriarty.

Once her identity has been revealed, Moriarty tells Sherlock that he interrupted several of her plans and that her first instinct was to kill him. This aligns with hints dropped earlier in the season that before Sherlock left London, an assassin had been hired to kill him with a staged heroin overdose but was called off at the last moment. Moriarty says, "the more I learned about you, the more curious I became. Here, at last, seemed to

be a mind that rivaled my own, something too complicated and too beautiful to destroy at least without further analysis. So I devised a way to study you in your own environment. . . . Imagine my surprise when I realized how much we had in common." To which Sherlock replies, "I have about as much in common with you as I do a dung beetle." But Moriarty insists that they are the same, saying, "I see everything you do. I feel it. Makes the world quite dull, no? Looking at a man and knowing all his secrets." Where Cumberbatch's Sherlock never objects to the notion that he and James Moriarty are the same, even argues in favor of the idea in their final confrontation,



**Figure 20 - Dormer's Moriarty as Miller's Holmes springs the trap**

Miller's Sherlock never accepts the idea, not because he disagrees with Jamie Moriarty's assessment of her own intelligence, but rather because their moral differences are more important than their intellectual similarities. Where Cumberbatch's Sherlock and Jim Moriarty do the same things for different reasons, Miller's Sherlock and Jamie Moriarty see the same things but understand them differently and make different decisions.

Where *Sherlock* constructs Sherlock's sociopathy and social impairment as the strength that allows him to understand and therefore catch criminals, *Elementary* makes it

clear that while his intellect does enable Sherlock to solve crimes, and is clearly his defining trait, it also is the source of his greatest weaknesses. Though he is never as obnoxious as Cumberbatch's Sherlock, Miller's Holmes can be arrogant and rude in ways that make him difficult to work with and less effective as a detective. The series suggests that his abilities are also at least part of the root of his near-fatal addiction. In their final confrontation, Moriarty asks, "Do you know why you're so drawn to narcotics? Because you're in near constant pain. Your sensitivities – they make you a great detective but they also hurt you. I know what that's like, Sherlock. Only me." Sherlock agrees with this assessment but he then reveals that he has led her into a trap that will allow her arrest; he says that the trap was Watson's idea. He agrees that he and Moriarty are intellectually similar, but what matters are his similarities with Watson, their shared values and their friendship. When he overcomes the arrogance borne of his intellect and works in partnership with Watson, together they are able to defeat Moriarty without *Sherlock's* reliance on violence.

In *Elementary*, violence is problematic, rather than a problem to be solved. Even in Sherlock's final confrontation with Moriarty, wherein he fakes an overdose to draw out a recordable confession of her crimes, the only violence is against himself and it is faked. Even the emotional trauma is contained to the villain, whereas Sherlock's faux death inflicts terrible emotional trauma on John Watson, in addition to the physical violence involved in Moriarty's (supposed?) death. In "The Woman/Heroine", violence is the province of the villain and her henchmen; neither Holmes, Watson or the NYPD harm anyone during the course of the episode. It is not constructed as a vital part of masculinity and this connection is textually disputed. In the first conversation she has in



her true identity, Moriarty explains that her clients sometimes find her gender to be a challenge, which she deals with by using a male proxy. She scoffs, "As if men had a monopoly on murder." Making Moriarty female complicates the simple violence equals masculinity equation and allows the male characters a greater range for masculine expression.

This is not to say that Miller's Holmes does not grapple with the possibility of violence at times. In episode twelve of the first season, titled "M", Sherlock still believes that his beloved Irene Adler was murdered in London by a serial killer called "M" whom he had been tracking; no body was found but there were clues indicating M's signature murder style. Sherlock tracks M down and tells Watson, "I have no intention of capturing M. I have every intention of torturing and murdering him." Watson replies that she did not help him stay sober just to become a murderer. She promises not to follow but says that she will tell Captain Gregson what Holmes is planning. He answers, "You do as you feel you must, Watson. I'll do the same." During their conversation, Holmes gathers up the tools for his torture of M from various places in their brownstone. Watson is horrified at his plan and his actions are constructed as irrational, immature, and unprofessional, rather than simply doing "what a man's gotta do". When Watson goes to Captain Gregson with the information as she said she would, Gregson is furious. "Son of a bitch!" he says. "I am pissed. I get [in the sense of understand] revenge. I've lost friends on the job to scumbags. Believe me, there's been more than a few times I thought about taking things into my own hands. But I didn't. Now, he [Holmes] may not be a cop, but he's been around law enforcement long enough to know that." Gregson reads as



**Figure 21 - Holmes' tools for his interrogation of "M"**

extremely masculine - a tall, strapping man with a strong New York accent, with great authority in the precinct, who is respected by his subordinate detectives and by Holmes. He makes it clear that to be an effective professional means putting one's feelings aside and controlling any violent impulses. Holmes' desire for vengeance may be understandable but it is the hallmark of a boy rather than a man, an adolescent having a tantrum rather than a man doing a man's work. That he eventually allows M to live (albeit with a carefully non-lethal stab wound) is evidence of emotional progress, but it is also partly due to M's convincing him someone else was responsible for killing Irene. Violence is constructed as part and parcel of the impulsivity that led to Holmes' addiction, as something that he needs to work to outgrow in order to achieve the more mature masculinity displayed by Captain Gregson.

This latitude for a more diverse masculinity than we see in *Sherlock*, for example, provides room for female characters with important roles in the narrative and allows for a much greater emotional complexity and texture in relationships. It suggests a process of

moving beyond gender binaries in the 21st century and the possibility of greater freedom for both men and women. It is my hope that we will see more Sherlock adaptations that change and play with the Moriarty/Holmes binary as *Elementary* does rather than simply taking it to its extreme as does *Sherlock*.

### **Chapter Six – Conclusion: "Elementary, Said He"**

After analyzing this plethora of texts and spilling a fair amount of printer ink, I hope I have made a case that constructions of masculinity in Sherlock Holmes adaptations have shifted from valorizing order and rationality as bedrock masculine traits in the early 20th century to a understanding of masculinity as boiling over with disorder, anxiety, and ambiguity in the 21st century. This aligns with what we would expect based on the work of Feasey, Gates, Kord & Krimmer and other theorists on masculinity and the detective genre and provides additional support for these theories.

We began by looking at Sherlock Holmes as a figure of authority and order. While the detective genre is typically seen as a conservative genre by theorists. Gates says that "the detective film tends to offer conservative messages about race, class and gender – bringing closure to anxieties raised in the course of the narrative about white masculinity's place" (Gates 2006, p. 24). Even the latest adaptations ultimately maintain the status quo and have a generally positive attitude toward the police and government; earlier adaptations took pains to sand down even the small amount of rebellion and eccentricity contained in the Doyle canon. The early Holmeses have orderly homes, orderly habits, and good relations with the police and the communities surrounding them. They are firmly ensconced in the system and are unapologetic supporters of it. By the late sixties, a greater degree of disorder begins to creep in. Cushing's 221B begins to look a bit more bohemian and he is willing to make his own determinations about the dispensation of the criminals he catches, as when he allows the culprit to go free in "The Blue Carbuncle", and his ties to the community seem less tight, although he is still quite cheerfully familiar with the police. By the mid-1980s, Brett's 221B is stuffed full of

papers and oddments and his behavior is far more eccentric. His use of intravenous cocaine is mentioned in the first few minutes of the first episode of the series, and he seems to have little use for the police; law enforcement's role in the Granada series is quite limited, in fact, compared to other adaptations. In the 21st century, Cumberbatch's Holmes is a self-admitted sociopath who keeps human eyeballs in his refrigerator, while Miller's is just out of drug-abuse rehabilitation and prone to crashing borrowed cars in fits of temper. These are all counter-culture positions, anti-establishment positions, that decouple both heroism and masculinity from authority to some extent and express anxiety about the establishment's ability to create justice and masculinity's ability to work effectively in the contemporary world, even as they try to reassure by reconciling with the establishment (and restoring the status quo) in the end. Gates quotes Ian Craib, who states, "whereas masculine qualities were once seen as normal and good they are now seen as politically and morally wrong, as perhaps in crisis, and as damaging for all concerned (724)" (Gates 2006, p. 29). This anxiety about masculinity, however, is always safely contained by the removal of the dangerous criminal and society's return to the status quo.

Likewise, and perhaps most interesting for me personally, the Watson/Holmes relationship moves from a stable, sidekick-and-hero relationship in the early texts, to something more complicated and richer as time goes on. By the Granada series in the 1980s, the Watson/Holmes relationship is fraught with both tension and importance. It is clearly the lynchpin of the series as a whole, and much of the emotional through-line of the episodes centers on it. Brett's Holmes cares enough about Watson to get his feelings hurt and take retribution when Watson leaves for a trip to the country, for example, and

the series' use of the Watson voice-over narration foregrounds the character, in contrast to his being something of an afterthought in many earlier adaptations. The 21st century series are both quite clear that the Holmes/Watson relationship is their defining feature. *Sherlock* plays with the queer possibilities of the relationship without actually following through, but makes Watson an equal co-star with heroic qualities of his own, perhaps even, arguably, the hero of the series on his own merit (Toadvine, 2012; Marinaro & Thomas, 2012). *Elementary* promotes Watson to full detective and equal partner, while setting the romantic aspects of a possible relationship to the side. Their friendship centers on the ways in which their interaction allows each of them to grow; Sherlock begins to grow past his addictions and become a healthier, more mature person, while Joan blossoms into an exceptional detective. The early texts use the dyad of Holmes and Watson to shore up hegemonic masculinity and the exclusion of women from the public sphere. The later texts continue this tradition to varying degrees, with the exception of *Elementary*, but support more diverse constructions of masculinity in acknowledging the depth of the relationship and, in the case of *Sherlock*, its homoerotic underpinnings. *Elementary*, on the other hand, while still ultimately supporting the status quo, makes the most interesting, and most direct, exploration of masculinity of any of the texts. Its Sherlock rejects a dysfunctional masculinity that clearly does not work and attempts to construct a healthier vision of masculinity that is comfortable with emotion, rational and mature, without losing any of his abilities as a detective and with a female Watson as his equal partner. Again, this supports theorists' understandings of early 21st century masculinity as making moves to incorporate formerly "feminine" traits like empathy and emotional savvy while still maintaining some of the traits of hegemonic masculinity such

as facility with violence. Gates writes that "men in today's society are expected to exhibit, to some degree, the qualities associated with traditional masculinity – strength, heroism, virility, and violence – and yet also the qualities previously associated with femininity – emotional vulnerability, parental affection, and romantic tendencies – to be acceptable to contemporary society (2006, p. 29). And yet, Kord & Krimmer note that, as we see in *Sherlock*, this does not always or even usually result in greater visibility and agency for women in these texts. Instead, it often results in the co-optation of these traits into the masculine while sidelining or removing female characters (2011, p. 39).

Lastly, we examined the rise of the detective/killer relationship as a relationship of doubles, looking at the ways in which Professor Moriarty starts out as simply another villain, albeit a skilled one, and ends up becoming Sherlock's evil twin. As Kord & Krimmer (and others) show, there is a very strong trend from the 70s onward of cops and detectives becoming more and more like the criminals they catch, and vice versa (2011, p. 13). While Brett makes less use of this, *Sherlock* pins its most important moments of the series on the Moriarty/Holmes resemblance; this relationship gets to the series' most crucial question of what Sherlock will choose to become and whether his self-labeled sociopathy will prevent him from fulfilling his potential as both a good and a great man. *Elementary* plays with this notion of doubling, making Moriarty a female love interest as well as Sherlock's greatest foe, but clarifies that she actually is not as much like Holmes as she thinks. *Elementary* privileges values and emotional connections over intellect and makes it clear that Sherlock is much more like Joan Watson than he is like Jaime Moriarty, despite their matched intelligence. This hero/villain dyad is a result of anxiety about masculinity and the place of violence in both masculinity and society. These texts,

*Sherlock* included, connect violence and masculinity intimately and then try to work out how that can coexist with a civilized community but also how society could possibly exist without it. *Elementary* does a better job of answering that question coherently than most other texts but it is still a work in progress.

I hope to continue to do more research on this topic in the future. Future projects could include a generic analysis on Irene Adler very similar to the analyses done here, a paper on geography in *Sherlock* and *Elementary* that looks in detail at the differences between how London and New York are constructed, a paper on the surveillance state and 21st century Sherlock Holmes adaptations, and possibly an analysis of race and masculinity in the recent independent comic *Watson and Holmes*, which concerns an African-American Holmes and Watson living in Harlem, New York.

Another project that could spring from this work is a genre analysis of discourses of masculinity in the Guy Ritchie-directed films *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Game of Shadows* (2011), similar to the television program analyses completed here. Like many of the later Holmeses we have looked at in this thesis, Robert Downey Jr.'s Holmes has the surface appearance of disorder. His personal appearance is often dirty and disshelved, and even when well-groomed he tends toward rather bohemian, Romantic clothing with a cravat tied messily beneath his shirt rather than around the collar. The disguises he takes are almost always of the underclass, beggars and opium addicts, outside the established order of the middle and upper classes. His home is a riot of experimental equipment and curios of all types, and he performs ballistics experiments by shooting into its walls. But underneath all of the disorder, ultimately he embodies a masculine performance of order. When engaging in fighting (which he does with some



regularity, these movies falling more into the action genre rather than the mystery genre) his exceptional mind is able to predict the course of the fight and how to best disable his opponent, which is presented to the audience with a slow-motion walk-through of the battle and a voice over narrating his thoughts. Holmes imposes order on the disorder of violence, as well as restoring order by capturing or killing the criminals who disrupt society. Unlike in *Elementary*, Downey's Holmes's masculine violence is unproblematic and fully engaged as a necessary part of an orderly society.

With the reclaiming of violence, the construction of Moriarty as Holmes' double disappears. Moriarty is left deliberately faceless and shadowy throughout the entirety of the first film. When he is revealed in the second film, he is a rather ordinary-looking (if somewhat sinister) middle-aged professor, a contrast to Downey's Byronic Holmes rather than a likeness. He is played purely as a villain and a plot device, with connections to foreign terrorists that play up the colonial attitudes of the original stories. Rather than visiting Holmes, as in *Sherlock* and the Brett series, Holmes goes to see him in his university office, where he is preparing for a lecture tour in his full academic regalia. With a Holmes much more Romantic than academic, the two men are clearly intended as opposites rather than doppelgangers.

Instead, Holmes' double here is constructed as Watson, played by Jude Law. The pronounced homoeroticism and homosociality of these films has already been explored by Polasek (2013) and Graham & Galen (2012). In the second film, Watson's wife Mary (Actor's Name) is disposed of via Holmes pushing her off a train, harmlessly but with ludicrous levels of symbolism, while Holmes' own love interest, Irene Adler (Rachel McAdam) seems to be poisoned to death by Moriarty in the first twenty minutes of the film.

With these obstacles to male bonding removed, the two men are free to go about their adventures. Holmes is the needier of the pair, here, perpetually hurt by Watson's desire to replace him with domestic life and a wife. However, he tends to be kinder to Watson than in other adaptations, and kinder often than Watson is to him. While Watson does a fair amount of caretaking of Holmes, Holmes also holds Watson's money for him to keep him from gambling it away, a level of reciprocity not seen in the other adaptations. Just before he and Moriarty take their supposedly-fatal plunge into the falls, Watson arrives on the scene and Holmes closes his eyes, seeming distraught that Watson will have to witness his end. Rather than leaving Watson in the dark about his survival for years, Holmes reappears at the end of film, having posted a gift ahead to let Watson know he is alive - much less cruel than Cumberbatch's Holmes' manner of dealing with the situation, for example. The movie is upfront that Holmes and Watson are the leading couple.

There are other interesting topics to be found in the films as well, including a genre analysis concerning whether the films should be counted as part of the Holmes subgenre at all, given their focus on action and dismissive treatment of the deductions which are usually at the heart of the A-plots of Holmes adaptations, an analysis of the films as entries into the steampunk subgenre of science fiction/fantasy, and a comparison between the films' depictions of London versus that in other Holmes adaptations.

As for the Holmes subgenre as a whole, while it seems unlikely that new versions will continue to be produced at the rate of the last few years, a property that has been adapted since the beginning of film has proven staying power that does not seem to be waning. Perhaps this is due to the workmanlike style of the original stories leaving space for interpretation; perhaps if the original stories were denser, or more detailed, or even

just more carefully written, they would have been, ironically, less long-lived. Or perhaps Doyle's emphasis on the urban, the scientific, and issues of law-and-order tapped into concerns inherent to the continuing Machine Age. I think it most likely that the duo of Holmes and Watson is the real reason for the stories' continued success, however. Without the humanity of that friendship, the other themes of the stories are less compelling, and I would argue that this is part of the reason for the later adaptations' pre-occupation with the Holmes/Watson relationship. Other detective stories appeared around the same time as Doyle's, but none have stuck with us so decisively; I would argue that Doyle's rivals were no less skillful, and had the elements of a mystery, a detective, an urban environment, etc. but lacked the friendship, the human element if you will, that is the heart of Doyle's stories.

Gledhill writes that variation is the life blood of the adaptation; possibilities for new visions of Holmes and Watson are virtually unlimited. I would hope to see greater diversity explored in future adaptations, in terms of race, sexual orientation, genders, abilities, etc. A canonically gay Holmes and Watson seems an inevitability to me but I cannot predict how long it will take before the idea is mainstream enough to attract funding. An adaptation of the *Watson and Holmes* comic might be interesting to see, as would an adaptation with females in both roles in a high-profile adaptation. I have been disappointed with *Elementary's* second season and I hope for a return to greater thoughtfulness and quality in their third year. Overall, a lull in the number of adaptations is certain over time, particularly since so many have been produced lately, but I have no doubt that adaptations of Sherlock Holmes will continue to be produced for many decades to come.

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