

AALBORG UNIVERSITY

# Representations of Sherlock Holmes

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A Study of Sherlock Holmes' New Trademarks as a Sex symbol,  
Action hero, and Comedian in the 21st Century



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Kandidatspeciale - Master's thesis  
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## 1. Introduction

The fascinating and famous story *A Study in Scarlet* is written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887. This detective novel was the first story to feature the character of Sherlock Holmes. The novel is based on the companionship between the world's only consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes, and the veteran war doctor referred to as Dr. John Hamish Watson (Porter, 2012, p. 5). At first the story attracted little public attention and interest; however, four years later it became an immense success and this ensured that Conan Doyle wrote a series of sequels (ibid.). In fact, Conan Doyle wrote four novels and 56 short stories about the two main characters (ibid., p. 145).

The deerstalker, the magnifying glass, and the curved pipe are signs and trademarks which make the character of Sherlock Holmes recognisable for audiences around the world. The popularity is not decreased despite the fact that some of the stories are written over 100 years ago. The original four novels and fifty six stories are great inspirations for adaptations in many different genres such as comics, theatre, radio programmes, video games, TV-series, and films (ibid., p. 6). In the TV-series and film adaptations every actor, screen writer, and director have their own ideas as to how the detective and doctor should be portrayed. Even though several trademarks reappear in the adaptations, it is remarkable that new trademarks surface. Sherlock Holmes is a sex symbol, an action hero, and a comedian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The different ways in which Holmes and Watson are portrayed relate to image, which the following section presents.



Kiwicraig, 2014

### 1.1 Sherlock Holmes' image

The character of Sherlock Holmes is believed to have been inspired from Conan Doyle's own professor, Dr. Joseph Bell. Dr. Bell could diagnose patients' diseases based on minor observations (Lycett, 2008, p. 190). This must have intrigued and fascinated Conan Doyle when he created Sherlock Holmes as one of his fictitious characters. As mentioned, Holmes has been portrayed numerous times since *A Study in Scarlet* was published and the character continues to be renewed and updated for new audiences. Therefore, Holmes is one of the most portrayed fictive characters in stage and cinematic productions (Porter, 2012, p. 6).

Despite the fact that Conan Doyle never gave a clear and thorough description of Holmes' appearance, Sidney Paget, a British illustrator, still managed to create illustrations of Holmes which helped create the image of Holmes as audiences know him today. Paget illustrated the publications in *The Strand Magazine*. The assignment of illustrating Sherlock Holmes was supposed to be handed to his younger brother, but by accident it went to Sidney Paget (Porter, 2012, p. 25). Some believe that Paget used Walter Paget, his younger brother, as a model for Sherlock Holmes, while others claim that Paget's illustrations of Holmes were inspired by a description Dr. Watson offers in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Hence, Dr. Watson describes Holmes:

*His very person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer. In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessive lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those intervals of torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. His thin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of determination. His hands were invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals, yet he was possessed of extraordinary delicacy of touch, as I frequently had occasion to observe when I watched him manipulating his fragile philosophical instruments.*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 14-5)

John Watson's description of Holmes contains none of the trademarks which make Holmes and even Watson recognisable all over the world. It is believed that Paget, through his illustrations, gave Holmes some of the recognisable trademarks such as the high collared coat and the deerstalker (Porter, 2012, p. 25). These and many other trademarks are often included when actors and directors create TV-series or film adaptations and representations of Sherlock Holmes.

When adapting a fictional story, it is sometimes necessary to reinvent and renew the character; however, most of the adaptations stay true to the idea that Holmes is situated in Victorian London. Nonetheless, in the recent adaptations the plot unfolds in modern London or New York. The plot still contains the original Conan Doyle-storyline, but it is modernised to a current time scale. This also means that the fictitious character of Holmes develops and adds some new trademarks to his persona.

This now means that he is a 21<sup>st</sup> century sex symbol, comedian, and action hero. When taking this into consideration, this thesis is



Toronto Public Library

interested in examining why these changes are possible. Moreover, Steven Moffat, the creator of *Sherlock* (2010-) stated before the premiere of his television series that

*Conan Doyle's stories were never about frock coats and gas light; they're about brilliant detection, dreadful villains and blood-curdling crimes- and frankly, to hell with crinoline. Other detectives have cases, Sherlock Holmes has adventures, and that's what matters.*

(Block, 2010)

Based on this notion, it is noticeable that the recent adaptations still contain detective work, villains, and thrilling crimes which suggest that the stories of Sherlock Holmes still feature the original trademarks although they take place in a more current and modern time frame.

## 1.2 Film and TV-series adaptations

The first film adaptation of Sherlock Holmes was an American production named *Sherlock Holmes Baffled* (Barnes, 2011, p. 216). It was a black and white edition from 1900 and it lasts about 35 seconds (ibid.). It depicts Holmes facing a villain who keeps disappearing. The film paved the way for succeeding actors to make their own representations of Sherlock Holmes. Representations of Holmes have been made by actors such as Viggo Larsen, William Gillette, Clive Brook, Basil Rathbone, Peter Cushing, Jeremy Brett, Robert Downey Jr., Benedict Cumberbatch, and Jonny Lee Miller (ibid., p. 316-29). The different representations included are accounted for in the following part of this introduction. Furthermore, the reasons for choosing them are elaborated on in chapter two: *Methodology*.

The recent adaptations create a newfound love for Sherlock Holmes. Both pre-existing and newer fans come together and embrace the new sides of the detective. One of the new sides experienced in relation to Sherlock Holmes is found in Guy Ritchie's two adaptations; *Sherlock Holmes* from 2009 and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* from 2011. In the adaptations by Ritchie, Holmes turns into an action hero who is not afraid of going into combat. At the same time, the character of Holmes is interpreted as charming, bohemian, scruffy, and unhygienic in the Robert Downey Jr.'s representation. The two films are both set in Victorian London. The first film is based on Holmes and Watson fighting against Lord Blackwood's black magic and the second film focuses on Holmes' battle with Professor Moriarty.

The basis of the two adaptations is the special relationship between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. The word 'bromance' is used frequently in connection to the films. According to Gyldendals Røde Ordbøger, 'bromance' is a slang word used to describe the intense and nonsexual relationship between two men (Gyldendal, 2014). Robert Downey Jr. added further speculations about the relationship and bromance aspect during the promotion of the film in 2009. He stated that Holmes and Watson are 'two men who happen to be roommates, wrestle a lot and share a bed. [...]' (Carroll, 2009).

The concept of bromance is also present in other adaptations, one of them being the British BBC production *Sherlock* which started airing in 2010. It features Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as Sherlock Holmes and John Watson and it is created by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. The plot of the episodes is almost identical to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories yet modernised a bit. Holmes is an asexual man with a clear substance abuse who lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century London while Watson is a veteran doctor who has returned from serving in Afghanistan. The TV-series, just as Ritchie's adaptation, focuses a lot on the relationship between the two main male characters. The creators and the actors made Holmes into a comical figure that lacks social skills and is viewed by a lot of people as a homosexual man. This creates humorous scenes which the audiences are able to enjoy.

*Sherlock* (2010-) frequently touches upon Holmes' sexuality and this is also done in the recent American adaptation. Robert Doherty's CBS TV-series *Elementary* (2012-) completely renews the stories of Sherlock Holmes. The television series from 2012 stars Jonny Lee Miller as recovering drug addict Sherlock Holmes and Lucy Liu as Joan Watson, his sober companion. The series is set in 21<sup>st</sup> century New York and shows Holmes in the time after his rehab. The new side to Sherlock Holmes features him as a sex symbol with a clear sexual orientation. It is often indicated that Holmes has sex with women, but he does not sleep with the female Watson. Doherty wants to create a TV-series that does not contain a love affair with the two lead characters although it is often indicated that the pair could be together (Roberts, 2012). Doherty remains true to his own statement that he wants the relationship to be professional and let them focus on solving crimes in New York (ibid.).

There is no doubt that Sherlock Holmes and John Hamish Watson have undergone a huge transformation since their birth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Some trademarks survive while others are added in connection to the representations and adaptations. A few trademarks are modernised in order to fit within a modern time frame. This concludes the introduction of this master's thesis and as Sherlock Holmes would have uttered:

*"Come, Watson, come!" he cried. "The game is afoot."*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 711)

### **1.3 Problem statement**

This thesis is based around the new trademarks of Sherlock Holmes. The recent adaptations introduce new sides to the character than the ones from Conan Doyle's stories. Therefore, three new trademarks are examined and put in the analysis. The three chosen trademarks are:

- The sexual identity of Sherlock Holmes.
- Sherlock Holmes as an action hero.
- The funny and humorous detective.

When viewing the more recent film and TV-adaptations, how is it possible to view Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's literary works with the character of Sherlock Holmes as a cultural and universal text? It is obvious to see that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character receives new trademarks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, this thesis wishes to illustrate and analyse the changes experienced in connection to Sherlock Holmes and thus examine why these changes are possible.

In order to do it, the following sub-questions will be analysed with the aim of answering these research question:

- How is Sherlock Holmes' sexuality represented?
- How does Sherlock Holmes fulfil being categorised as an action-hero?
- What makes it possible for Sherlock Holmes to be a comedian on screen?
- Why do audiences need a consulting detective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

### **1.4 Structure**

The following structure occurs in this thesis:

- Methodology: In this chapter the theories and adaptations are accounted for. The reasons for incorporating these theories and adaptations are also included in this chapter. Moreover, the

theories have received some critique which is illustrated in this section. This helps to demonstrate the thoughts on why the theories are included. The chapter of methodology further contains a section on the difficulties when analysing two different media. This chapter closes with a section on the limitations of this thesis and how this influences the structure.

- Theory: This chapter contains sections to conceptualise the theories for this thesis. The theories which are used in the analysis are the theory of adaptation and Stuart Hall's view on representation. Furthermore, culture, trademarks, and signs are important concepts which are elaborated. In connection to Hall's theory, Ferdinand De Saussure's theory of semiotics and signs as well as Roland Barthes' thoughts on denotation and connotation are chosen.
- Analysis: In the analysis the new trademarks of Sherlock Holmes are highlighted. The character of Sherlock Holmes is recognisable to the world due to his trademarks such as the deerstalker, pipe, trench coat, and the relationship with Watson. He is reinvented in newer adaptations with new trademarks such as being a sex symbol, an action hero, and a comedian. These trademarks do not entirely correspond with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories.

The analysis contains several close-readings from a number of adaptations and representations. These include Guy Ritchie's two blockbusters *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), Steven Moffat's and Mark Gatiss' *Sherlock* (2010-), and lastly Robert Doherty's *Elementary* (2012-).

- Conclusion: In this chapter, this thesis' conclusive findings are revealed and the entire thesis is concluded on and finally, future research questions are presented.

## 2. Methodology

In this methodological chapter, the theories, films, and TV adaptations incorporated are presented. The difficulties when comparing two different media are explained and why it is essential to compare different adaptations and representations in order to see the changes that the character of Sherlock Holmes has undergone. The adaptations are compared to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original literary stories and the analysis uses theories which show the new trademarks that are added to Sherlock Holmes.

### 2.1 Comparing two different media

This thesis is based on a comparative analysis of two different media, literature and film. It is natural when working with two different media that obstacles occur since the media are different from each other. One example deals with characterisation which is done by either telling or showing the reader or viewer. Characterising in literature is done by telling since the visual aspect is lacking. A character is therefore described according to either appearance or behaviour. A character's thoughts, state of mind, and minor character's thoughts can also be included when doing a characterisation. In a film or TV-series, characterisation is easily done by showing actions, narratives, body language, and facial expressions. It is easy for an actor or director to show a character's visual trademarks.

#### 2.1.1 *Limitations on screen*

This section explains the limitations in films since film and TV-series often have a time frame which must be kept. It is important to mention in relation to this thesis that the film media do not allow the viewers to imagine their own versions of the character because an actor is representing the character. The narratives often disappear and directors use other methods to tell their stories. Examples of these methods are mentioned in the paragraph above. In relation to the stories of Sherlock Holmes, the narratives of John Watson have disappeared. Guy Ritchie, Steven Moffat, Mark Gatiss, and Robert Doherty are the directors and creators of the films and TV-series used in the analytical chapter. The above-mentioned directors have all chosen to leave out Watson's narratives and the stories are told by either actions or through the main character Sherlock Holmes.

### 2.1.2 Limitations in literature

Literature often lacks the visual aspect, but this can be somewhat added by illustrations. Different types of illustrations are included in the stories of Sherlock Holmes as *The Strand Magazine* used illustrations by Sidney Paget. He created some of Sherlock Holmes' existing trademarks though Sir Arthur Conan Doyle never incorporated these in his stories. An example is the deerstalker which Conan Doyle never described in his stories (Porter, 2012, p. 25). Conan Doyle wrote that Holmes wears a 'close-fitting cloth cap' (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 159) that Paget through his illustrations turned into one of the most recognisable synonyms of the consulting detective.



Stock, 2012

One of the main themes in Stuart Hall's theory of representation deals with social interactions that help to accept the cultural meanings to each word. Written words have meaning attached to them through social interactions in cultures. Stuart Hall coins representation as

*the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the "real" world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events.*

(Hall, 1997, p. 17)

One example is the written word *CAR* which needs a cultural and mental understanding. The trademarks such as the deerstalker, pipe, and magnifying glass are culturally connected to Sherlock Holmes. If one sees the image of the deerstalker, one would automatically connect it to the character of Holmes. Consequently, the deerstalker is incorporated in many of the film and TV-series adaptations of the stories.

Despite these mentioned obstacles, the two media, literature and film, are often subjects for adaptations and representations as the ones of the consulting detective stories. The next section illustrates why the incorporated theories are chosen for this thesis.

## 2.2 Selected theories

The theories included in this master's thesis are coined by Stuart Hall, Ferdinand De Saussure, and Roland Barthes. Their theories are chosen because they view images as a form of language. A language carries meaning which is shaped through social interaction. The image of a man wearing a deerstalker while using a magnifying glass and smoking a pipe carries connotations and meanings. It means that most people recognise the image of the consulting detective based on these trademarks. Sherlock Holmes is an iconic image in British culture and he is one of the most recognisable images in literature and film.

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall has developed a theory of representation. It is selected for this thesis since actors and directors make representations in the form of film or TV adaptations. They create their own versions of Sherlock Holmes. According to Stuart Hall a representation is when 'using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people' (Hall, 1997, p. 15). Actors in these adaptations represent Holmes and are therefore conveying something meaningful about Conan Doyle's original character.

The late Stuart Hall is a natural choice since his points of view shaped cultural studies. Hall's three approaches of representation are elaborated on in the analytical chapter of this thesis. Especially one approach stands out because it deals with representation as a part of shaping meanings within a culture. This approach is named the constructionist approach of representation. The public shape meanings of Sherlock Holmes both within and across cultures.

Critics argue that Stuart Hall's approaches of representation are too narrow and lack an important focus upon knowledge and power relations (Hall, 1997, p. 27). As Hall states:

*[...] representation was understood on the basis of the way words functioned as signs within language. But [...] meaning often depends on larger units of analysis - narratives, statements, groups of images, whole discourses which operate across a variety of texts [...]*

(ibid., p. 42)

In this quote, Hall demonstrates that representation previously functioned only as words in a language. The words are understood as signs that are read and translated into meaning by the viewers. However, words are not sufficient enough and other principles are taken into account. Representation is concerned with social interactions and how knowledge is created and shared within these interactions. Meanings are created through interactions and help to create an image, e.g. the image of Sherlock Holmes based on his trademarks. This image is translated across cultures without using language and words.

Secondly, Ferdinand De Saussure's theory regarding semiotics and signs is applied in this thesis. Semiotics allows images to be read as a language across cultures. Each culture has their own meaning and understanding of an object or image. Some of the meanings are shared by several cultures, just as the image of Sherlock Holmes as explained in the introduction.

In the book *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (1997), Stuart Hall includes a chapter on the critique of Saussure's theory. Some of the criticism is based on the notion that Saussure does not pay enough attention to the relations between the signifier and the signified. This could be used to refer to objects 'in the "real" world' as Hall states (Hall, 1997, p. 34). Hall explains that a word refers to meanings and one example is *BOOK*. This word can refer to several different books or even a specific and particular one (ibid.). Furthermore, Ferdinand De Saussure tends to focus on formal language usage. Language changes over time and therefore it cannot be placed within a closed system. The formal and the informal language usage can change, but they both create meanings (Hall, 1997, p. 35).

The critic and semiotician Roland Barthes is the third theorist to be included in this thesis. He further develops Saussure's theory on semiotics as Barthes adds and incorporates concepts such as connotations and denotations. These concepts are attached in order to pay attention to the person who is reading and interpreting the image. It is important to incorporate the person who is interpreting an image when working with such an iconic figure as Sherlock Holmes. People around the world have different personal conventions about the character and these are useful in order to see how Holmes's trademarks have developed. However, one must keep in mind that Barthes' theory was published in 1957 and it is therefore more than 50 years old (egs.edu). Still, the concepts of denotation and connotation are being used in research around the world.

There has been a selection between theorists due to the page limitations. Michel Foucault is one of the rejected theorists. Stuart Hall is fascinated with Foucault and is influenced by his ideas. Foucault's view on representation is 'concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning through discourse' (Hall, 1997, p. 51). Foucault believes that seeing the discourse in its historical framework is important since the knowledge is bound in explicit contexts. Critics agree that Foucault tends to be too involved with the discourse and not the material (ibid.). Furthermore, he focuses a lot on the bond between power and knowledge in society and on how this is used by institutions to control societies (Hall, 1997, p. 47). Though, it would have been interesting to include Foucault's notion, it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

One of the initial ideas for a thesis was to solely view Sherlock Holmes' sexual identity and how it has changed throughout the years, adaptations, and representations. Some of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concepts and thoughts from her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985)

could be used as a theory. However, since she tends to focus more on the queer aspect it would not fulfil the goals entirely. However, the notion provided by Sedgwick will influence the analytical discussion of Holmes' sexuality, although Sedgwick's theory will not form part of the theoretical framework included in this thesis.

## 2.3 Selected film and TV adaptations

In order to make a comparative analysis of the representations, it is essential to incorporate adaptations of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories. Sherlock Holmes and John Watson have been made into numerous adaptations, but this thesis will only focus on the TV-series and film adaptations. Though, it would be feasible to focus upon radio programmes, video games, comic books, and other adaptations, it is not relevant for this master thesis. Sherlock Holmes has been portrayed numerous times and it is therefore essential to narrow down the number of adaptations used in the analytical chapter. Two films and two TV-series are used in the analytical chapter.

The two chosen film adaptations made Sherlock Holmes gain a new huge fan base in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The elder fan base is joined by newer fans who have discovered the consulting detective. The two film adaptations are blockbusters directed by Guy Ritchie. The first adaptation from 2009 is called *Sherlock Holmes* and the second adaptation is titled *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* and it premiered in 2011. The two films star Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law as the two iconic characters and place them in Victorian London.

One of the reasons for incorporating these films is based on a statement from the director. Guy Ritchie wants to make a representation where he could avoid using the clichés that surrounds Sherlock Holmes. He wants to remake the character of Holmes and in order to do so he adds a new trademark to the representation. Holmes is an action hero who is not afraid of going into fights face to face with his bare hands. This thesis will try to highlight why Ritchie could reinvent the fictitious character in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The first TV-series adaptation to be included aired its first episode in 2010. *Sherlock* was an instant success and the creators Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat have announced that the fourth season will air in 2016 (imbd.com, a). The characters of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are portrayed by Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman. The couple still resides at 221B Baker Street, but the television series is set in the 21<sup>st</sup> century London. The TV-series creates moments of origins for certain trademarks and this is the reason for including it.

One example of a moment of origin is the deerstalker. Gatiss and Moffat create a series of events in which the origin of the deerstalker is shown. Within the television series, Holmes is photographed by members of the paparazzi while he is wearing the hat. This photo is used on websites and Holmes hates it. The police force is actually teasing Holmes with it and mocks him at a press conference. Watson depicts a problem since the deerstalker is now a 'Sherlock Holmes'-hat.

The TV-series also adds a new trademark to the iconic character. He is a comical character which is amusing for the audiences. Holmes is often placed in humorous situations either involuntarily or voluntarily and it is often due to the lack of his social skills. He cannot decode normal behaviour and is often ignorant to other people's emotions.

The last adaptation included is a TV-series which completely renews Sherlock Holmes. Even though, *Elementary* (2012-) maintains some of the original trademarks from the unique stories by Conan Doyle, it adds a new trademark. Holmes is given a sexual identity and he is a sex symbol in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Director Robert Doherty has created this American adaptation named *Elementary* which started airing in 2012. In the series, Sherlock Holmes is sexually active, but only because his body requires it.

Another major change is seen in the character of John Watson. Doherty replaces the original character with a female sober-companion named Joan Watson. The setting is in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but Holmes now resides in New York after recovering from rehab due to his drug addiction. *Elementary* (2012-) is the most recent adaptation and many elements and trademarks are altered and changed.

This concludes the chapter of methodology. The next part of this thesis contains the conceptualisation of the theories. The theories are used when analysing the trademarks of Sherlock Holmes.



Daily Mail, 2013

### 3. Theory

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's consulting detective stories influence several types of media and cultures around the world. Holmes and Watson are reduced to a few trademarks and symbols which are decoded. The trademarks of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are understood by viewers and therefore it is essential to incorporate theories of representation and semiotics. Consequently, representation and the cultural meaning are included as a part of the theory.

The cultural theorist Stuart Hall and his points of view are an essential part of cultural studies and play a relevant part to this thesis. Especially the constructionist approach to representation displays how representations shape meanings about an object within and across cultures. The concept of trademarks and symbols are also introduced in this chapter.

This master's thesis will also contain a section which introduces the theory of semiotics as coined by Ferdinand De Saussure and Roland Barthes. Semiotics views the impact of images in the world and how these images are concepts formed by signs and languages. Sherlock Holmes also uses semiotics in his own detective work. This chapter on theories continues by conceptualising Saussure's theory regarding the signifier and signified. The theory of semiotics is useful when analysing an image of Sherlock Holmes. The image is tied up with constantly changing concepts and ideas. Roland Barthes' levels of denotation and connotation are incorporated because Holmes' and Watson's images bear connotations to people around the world.

#### 3.1 The theory of adaptation

Adaptation is the first term to be conceptualised since it is used several times throughout the analytical chapter. Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are inspiration for adaptations in a lot of different genres and media. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories inspire comics, films, radio programmes, stage performances, video games, thus even museums and tourist tours in London. The empirical materials are TV-series and film adaptations which are based on Conan Doyle's original stories.

Linda Hutcheon argues in *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) that adaptations usually reveal their sources and have to define their relationship to the texts openly (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 3). This open relationship often creates a negative view on the adaptation. Some critics believe that the adaptations are never as good as the original source material. This notion makes adaptations more vulnerable to criticism due to the fact that fans of the original material have high expectation to the final adaptation. Adaptations are forced to stay true to elements or parts of the original source otherwise fans are disappointed (ibid., p. 4).

One of the recent TV-series based on Sherlock Holmes is *Elementary* (2012-) and it is heavily critiqued by fans. Director Robert Doherty changes many elements and has not incorporated key trademarks from the original stories which upset fans in the Sherlockian world. The series does not stay true to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's original stories and this is frustrating for fans who love the source material (Handlen, 2014).

The British *Sherlock* (2010-) keeps many key trademarks and modernises them so they will function in 21<sup>st</sup> century London. The series has not received a lot of critique because it stays true to Conan Doyle's stories. The creators Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat create smaller moments of origin for certain trademarks and examples are the deerstalker and the pipe. The trademark of the pipe is also modernised. It is substituted with nicotine patches since smoking in public is banned several places in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The original three-pipe-problem is now turned into a three-patches-problem. These meta-moments are popular among the audiences and a reason that the series is loved.

### 3.2 Culture and representation

It is important to conceptualise the concept of culture before going further into Stuart Hall's view on representation. Culture is closely linked to representation since the theory of representation is a part of cultural studies. It is hard to define the concept of culture as it shifts a lot. Longman's online dictionary defines culture as '[...] the beliefs, way of life, art, and customs that are shared and accepted by people in a particular society [...]' (Longman, a).

Stuart Hall traditionally views the concept the culture as being the best within a society. The best product from different genres that is shared with audiences. The genres include painting, literature, and philosophy. The modern approach to culture divides the concept in two categories that being high culture and popular culture. High culture is defined as the best within different genres while popular culture is mass-produced products available to all audiences (Hall, 1997, p. 2). Hall continues and states that

*[c]ulture, it is argued, is not so much a set of things - novels, and paintings or TV programmes and comics - as a process, a set of practices. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings - the 'giving and taking of meaning' - between the members of a society or group.*

(ibid.)

In this quote, Stuart Hall demonstrates that he understands how the concept shifts. He describes that culture is about the meanings that are shared on a subject or an object. Culture is not defined as a steady concept. Hall sees culture as a concept that involves a power relation within society. Politics are connected with culture, but Hall understands that culture is never reduced to politics. This is due to the social and cultural struggle in a society (Procter, 2013, p. 2). Politics cannot define what culture should be because culture requires a social actor. Culture needs to be a part of a struggle and it is necessary because culture is active and changeable (ibid.). Politicians and societies will always argue what culture is and what culture should be.

### **3.3 Conceptualising symbols and trademarks**

Before continuing, it is essential to emphasise the concepts of trademarks and symbols since they are used extensively in the analytical part of this thesis. The Longman Dictionary contains three definitions on the noun *SYMBOL* and the first states that a symbol is 'a picture or shape that has a particular meaning or represents a particular organization or idea' (Longman, b). An example from the Sherlockian world is the deerstalker. It is a symbol of the famous consulting detective Sherlock Holmes. The second definition states that a symbol represents something, for instance an amount or a chemical substance. Finally, the third definition symbol refers to 'someone or something that represents a particular quality or idea' (ibid.). The character of Sherlock Holmes represents a certain set of qualities and ideas which Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wants to portray to the readers. These qualities and ideas are still present in the adaptations in some form.

The first definition of a trademark states that it refers to a specific name, word, or even sign in connection to a company. In order to exemplify, examples are words as *Coca cola* or 'The Golden Arches' from McDonalds (Longman, c). A second definition states that a trademark is something that is recognisable to others (ibid.). In the Sherlockian world, a trademark would be the deerstalker, a magnifying glass, the pipe, or even the strange relationship to John Watson.

### **3.4 The theory of representation**

Representation connects a meaning and a language to a cultural phenomenon (Hall, 1997, p. 15). Representation means that something stands in place of and stands for something else. Stuart Hall illustrates this in his book *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (1997) by viewing a cross. A cross is simply two wooden planks nailed together, but adding another view or beliefs

changes the meaning. If one adds Christian beliefs to the two wooden planks, the cross stands for the crucifixion of Christ and Christianity. Additionally, this is portrayed by words and symbols (ibid.).

In connection to Conan Doyle's stories about the consulting detective, the adaptations are categorised as representations. There are numerous adaptations and they contain symbols and trademarks from the original source material. The relationship between the original stories and the adaptations allow audiences to acknowledge that the film or TV-series is a new interpretation of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.

Stuart Hall states that there are three different approaches to representation. The first approach is the reflective theory and it focuses on how language can influence a pre-existing meaning. Language functions as a mirror when referring to a certain person, idea, or event. Participants in a conversation need to share the same concept of a word in order for this conversation to be fully understood. Hall uses the concept of a rose as an example. Participants in the conversation need to have a coded image of this plant in their own cultures otherwise the communication will break down (Hall, 1997, p. 24). The second approach is the intentional theory where it is examined if language expresses the intended meaning of what is being said. The intentional theory states that the speaker has the power of the words and he or she gets a specific meaning through to the audiences. By using a certain set of words the speaker always conveys a particular object or an event (Hall, 1997, p. 25).

The constructionist theory is the last approach and it researches if a meaning is constructed through language (ibid.). This approach acknowledges that representation is based on social activities and meanings are constructed within a society by using representational systems such as signs. Therefore, meanings are constructed or produced rather than placed upon a society or culture (Hall, 1997, p. 5). Constructionist theorists differentiate between a material world and the symbolic world. The material world consists of people and events while the symbolic world contains representational tools such as language and meanings. The two worlds should not mix, but this is inevitable since the material world cannot create meaning without using representation systems from the symbolic world. Stuart Hall acknowledges this flaw and illustrates that a picture is made with a camera and sounds are made with the human vocal cord (Hall, 1997, p. 25).

In the following section, semiotics as a way of viewing signs in our culture and understanding their meaning is conceptualised. Semiotics allows users to interpret images and symbols as a written text which is translated into a meaning. It is of relevance to incorporate this notion because Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are 'reduced' to a few recognisable signs that audiences decode. Interpreting a sign requires encoding and decoding. Encoding applies a meaning or code to a sign or image while decoding allows the

meaning to be interpreted (Hall, 1997, p. 62). Semiotics is also helpful in order to view Sherlock Holmes and John Watson as cultural symbols and iconic figures.

### 3.5 Semiotics

Ferdinand De Saussure developed the theory of semiotic which states that 'since all cultural objects convey meaning, and all cultural practices depend on meaning, they must make use of signs; and in so far as they do, they must work like language works, and be amenable to an analysis [...]' (Hall, 1997, p. 36). In other words, culture is reduced to readable signs which are analysed. Saussure's theory was criticised since it did not incorporate the interpreter.

The French critic Roland Barthes believes that semiotics is more than construction of words and their representation (ibid., p. 42). He further develops Saussure's thoughts and implements the importance of the reader or interpreter. In 1972, Barthes published *Mythologies* in which he uses semiotics as a mean of analysing popular culture. He sees signs as meanings that are shared and communicated across the world (Hall, 1997, p. 36).

Saussure believes that language consists of signs which are readable. A sign can be anything just as Saussure demonstrates in the following quote.

*Language is a system of signs that express ideas, and it therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. But it is the most important of all these systems.*

(Saussure, 2011, chapter 3)

Semiotics is applied to more than words, signs, and images. It is used on objects or events such as food and TV programmes since they carry connotations. Barthes analyses clothing and found that they are signifiers. They have a purpose of covering the body, but they also signify a cultural coding. An example of a cultural coding is a pair of blue Levis jeans that refers to a set of American values. Hereby clothing becomes a sign which is readable (ibid., p. 38).

The character of Sherlock Holmes uses semiotics in his own work, but he renames it *The Science of Deduction*. He deduces elements and traces which ordinary people ignore or neglect. The objects in Holmes' investigation contain signs that are decoded based on the information that the reader has. Sherlock Holmes has a lot of information which allows him to decode the message faster than others. He

decodes what others fail to do and this is one of the reasons why he is a successful consulting detective. He has some personal troubles when it comes to decoding society's codes and messages that are put forward in social interactions.

The next section focuses on Roland Barthes' theory on denotation and connotation. Saussure failed to incorporate the reader which Barthes' theory accomplishes. This is helpful when viewing the representations of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson as cultural texts.

### **3.6 Denotation and connotation**

Roland Barthes further develops Saussure's pre-existing theory of semiotics by adding a theory on denotation and connotation. Barthes wants to incorporate the reader and the cultural references that he or she uses. Denotation refers to the physical aspects of the signal and David Crow describes it as 'a photograph of a child represents a child. No matter who photographs the child and how they are photographed, in this first order of signification, they still just represent "child"' (Crow, 2010, p. 55).

Connotation happens when the reader applies a system of codes to the sign in order to interpret the meaning. The codes come from the reader's cultural background and the codes are therefore personal conventions which differ depending on the cultures. The conventions are agreements to how the sign and image are read and how the readers are supposed to respond (ibid.). The deerstalker is an example from the Sherlockian world. When a viewer sees this particular hat with earflaps, most people automatically think of Sherlock Holmes. This is due to the cultural values the image of Holmes has and how it is spread throughout cultures and societies.

Connotations are also obtained manually and one example arises when taking a photograph or creating an image. The photographer obtains certain connotations by using different strategies such as soft or hard lighting, various frames, and different colour schemes (ibid.).

The following concepts to be conceptualised are also defined by Ferdinand De Saussure. It is the concepts of signifier and signified which Saussure uses when interpreting a sign.

### **3.7 Sign**

Stuart Hall claims that there are two definitions on the concept of signs: an iconic sign and an indexical sign. The iconic sign symbolises the visual sign while the indexical sign is written or spoken signs (Hall, 1997, p.

20). Ferdinand De Saussure views a sign as containing both a signifier and a signified. The signifier and the signified function together and cannot be separated. The signifier is the form of the sign that being either a word, image, photo, or even an object. The signified is the concept that the signifier tries to let the interpreters decode (Hall, 1997, p. 31). The relationship between the signifier and the signified are unnatural since there is no obvious connection between the two concepts (Berger, 2013, p. 9).

Saussure states that signs must be defined by relatives and the difference between these relatives. An example is the concept of *FATHER* which is not fully understood without concepts like *MOTHER* and *CHILD* (Hall, 1997, p. 31). Saussure adds the importance of differences since '[...] marking of difference within language is fundamental to the production of meaning [...]' (ibid.). It is essential to understand the meanings behind the signs in order to connect words with concepts. This is illustrated by using binaries or direct opposites such as black and white or night and day.

Saussure argues that signs do not have fixed meanings and these meanings can change. Cultural codes are not universally fixed meanings and words can change meanings both within and across cultures and societies (Hall, 1997, p. 32). Hall uses the example of the word *BLACK* which has undergone a transformation in regards to the meanings attached to it. The word was previously associated with evil and dangers, but it has been redeemed. One initiative to change the meanings of the word is a slogan from the 1960s 'Black Is Beautiful' (ibid.). The signified is produced and shaped through history and the cultures the signified exists within. Stuart Hall states in *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (1997) that

*This opens up meaning and representation, in a radical way, to history and change. It is true that Saussure himself focused exclusively on the state of the language system at one moment of time rather than looking at linguistic change over time. However, for our purposes, the important point is the way this approach to language unfixes meaning, breaking any natural and inevitable tie between signifier and signified. This opens representation to the constant "play" or slippage of meaning, to the constant production of new meanings, new interpretations.*

(Hall, 1997, p. 32)

This underlines that meanings about signs, and representations, are not fixed. They change throughout time and the social interactions such as language usage. There is an active process when a reader tries to interpret a sign or representation about a concept.

### **3.8 Partial conclusion**

This concludes the theory section and all concepts are conceptualised. The concept of culture is included since Sherlock Holmes and John Watson are cultural icons. The theory of representation is important for this thesis because actors and directors adapt and give their view on how to represent the characters. Sherlock Holmes and John Watson carry a lot of signs and trademarks that are decoded by audiences around the world. These fans use connotations that are either universal or individual when decoding an image.

The next part of this thesis contains the analysis where there are transcripts and close readings from four different films and TV-series. The goal is to answer the problem statement which is stated on page 8.

## 4. Analysis

In order to uncover a pattern in the newest trademarks, transcripts from the adaptations are analysed. This is done in order to examine how the trademarks are represented. The trademarks that surround Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories have survived numerous adaptations in more than 100 years. The trademarks make it possible for audiences to decode the adaptation as a representation of the original Sherlock Holmes' stories. A trademark is a symbol, word or sign which is recognisable by others. In relation to Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, a trademark is Holmes' deerstalker, pipes, and magnifying glasses. However, it appears that Sherlock Holmes has received new trademarks in the recent adaptations such as him being a sex symbol, an action hero, and a comedian. The new trademarks are seen as an attempt to steer away from the classical clichés and trademarks that surround Holmes and Watson. Another approach is to view the new trademarks as a result of the Sherlock Holmes stories being cultural and universal texts.

### 4.1 Sherlock Holmes - the sex symbol

It is never stated in Conan Doyle's original stories that Sherlock Holmes is sexually or romantically involved with anybody and as a result he is often alluded to as a virgin. He does not have any apparent and clear sexual identity in the original stories. The recent adaptations treat this trademark differently, but all the adaptations give the character some form of sexuality. This part of the analysis examines Holmes' newfound sexuality and discusses why it is necessary to impose a sexual identity on a character in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

One of the most discussed trademarks in relation to Sherlock Holmes is the question of his sexuality. Holmes is a cultural figure and an icon without any apparent sexual identity. He does not have any obvious relationship with either a man or woman in the original stories which leads to many interpretations in the adaptations. This trademark allows audiences to recognise the Sherlockian universe and decode the adaptations. In terms of semiotics, Holmes is reduced to a sign which bears the signifier of asexual. It is not possible to place a label of sexuality on the character even though all of the adaptations try to make their own version.

Sherlock Holmes has no clear sexual identity and audiences are not able to define the consulting detective within a category in regards to his sexual identity. The author Harvey O'Brien describes in his article *Sherlock Holmes in Cinema* from the book *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle - Multi-Media Afterlives* (2013), the consequences of not giving Holmes a sexual identity in regards to the audience. The audiences are forced to rethink their definition of the icon character Sherlock Holmes 'on a fundamental human level'

(Vanacker, 2013, p. 69). O'Brien continues by highlighting that in a time with divisive images of one self and others, this categorisation can become difficult (ibid.).

This division between 'us' and 'the others' illustrates one aspect as to why the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs a consulting detective. Sherlock Holmes is a super-human with a brain capacity beyond average which means that he can solve most of his cases. He is talented, but it also scares the rest of the population. He is like 'a machine rather than a man' (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 378) and he seems to be a superhero. However, his new trademarks allow Holmes to be categorised as a human (Hayden, 2014). He contains flaws and he is more than just a cold machine of deductions. His personality, detective skills, and sexual identity, intrigue the audiences who become fans of the consulting detective.

Going further into the audiences' love and need for Sherlock Holmes, Edgar Smith describes the character as a symbol 'of all that we are not, but ever would be' (Shreffler, 1989, p. 15-16). In Edgar W. Smith's *The Implicit Holmes* (1946), he delivers a few reasons as to why readers love Holmes. It is due to the love of the Victorian time-period, the love for England and London, and lastly, that Holmes is everything that the readers are not. Sherlock Holmes is the superhero who can 'trample evil and [...] set aright the wrongs with which the world is plagued' (ibid.) and do so without failing. In regards to semiotics, Holmes is a symbol of an ordinary man who saves the British society and this is what the world requires at present.

#### 4.1.1 *Holmes and the man in his life*

The Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed in 1887 and section 11 was added to the Amendment Act. Section 11, or the Labouchere Amendment, states that

*Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is party to the commission of, or procures the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.*

(Cook, 2003, p. 42)

The Amendment Act previously concerned sodomy which occurs between men, women, and 'beasts' (ibid.), but section 11 targets homosexual men. Homosexuality between men was made illegal and men could be sentenced with up to two years of hard labour if being convicted. Homosexual men would try to keep relationships secret and not out in public. This would create frustrations and cause a lot of debate in

Victorian London. This might be the cause to why readers speculate about Sherlock Holmes' relationship with John Watson.

Holmes and Watson immediately bond and the two bachelors rent an apartment on Baker Street. Watson writes about his fascination with Holmes while he tries to uncover the character in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). The list features a lot of Holmes' flaws since he has no knowledge about literature, philosophy, and astronomy. When it comes to subjects such as geology, chemistry, and British law that are related to detective work, Holmes has a great deal of knowledge (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 15-6).

John Watson is more sceptical about the two bachelors moving in together, but does it in necessity in Mark Gatiss' and Steven Moffat's adaptation of *Sherlock* (2010-). Holmes' and Watson's relationship is questioned throughout the series and there is an underlining joke about the two men being homosexual. Holmes does not mind, but Watson denies this fact and often states that he likes women. He has several girlfriends and eventually ends up married to Mary Morstan just as the novel *The Sign of the Four* (1890) implies when Watson asks for her hand in marriage (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 113).

There are a number of incidents in the first episode *A Study in Pink* (2010) where it is indicated that people around Holmes and Watson question their relationship. The first example occurs when Holmes and Watson arrive at Baker Street and are shown the apartment by Mrs. Hudson.

[...]

HUDSON: What do you think then, Dr. Watson? There is another bedroom upstairs if you'll be needing two bedrooms?

WATSON: Of course we'll be needing two bedrooms.

HUDSON: Oh don't worry, there is all sorts round here. Mrs. Turner next door has got married ones.

[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E01, 14:20)

This is the first incident and Dr. Watson is left a bit confused, but he does not comment further on the situation. Mrs. Hudson decodes the situation and signs and with her knowledge, she decodes that the two men who are living together are in a relationship. She underlines this by asking if they will need the spare bedroom. In regards to Roland Barthes' theory of denotation and connotation, the denotation level is two men living together in an apartment. Mrs. Hudson's level of connotation decodes that they are in a relationship. This is based on her cultural background with personal conventions as explained in section 3.6

*Denotation and connotation* (p. 21). Mrs. Hudson bases her connotation on her neighbours married couple and perhaps other experiences with homosexual men.

Another reason why she decodes the connotation in this manner is because she knows Sherlock Holmes. She has never seen him befriending another man or woman, yet alone being romantically involved with either of the sexes, and therefore immediately associates Watson as a partner to Holmes.

The episode *A Study in Pink* (2010) contains several examples of people questioning Holmes' and Watson's relationship. The next incident in the same episode takes place at a restaurant where the two men are at a stake out.

[...]

ANGELO: Sherlock! Anything on the menu, whatever you want, free! On the house, for you and for your date.

HOLMES: Do you want to eat?

WATSON: I'm not his date!

ANGELO: This man got me off a murder charge.

HOLMES: He's Angelo. Three years ago, I successfully prove to Lestrade, at the time of a particularly vicious triple murder, that Angelo was in a different part of town, house-breaking.

ANGELO: He cleared my name.

HOLMES: I cleared it a bit. Anything happening opposite?

ANGELO: Nothing. But for this man, I'd have gone to prison.

HOLMES: You did go to prison.

ANGELO: I'll get a candle for the table. It's more romantic.

WATSON: I'm not his date!

HOLMES: You may as well eat. We might have a long wait.

[Angelo returns, bringing a candle for the table]

[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E01, 49:24)

The owner of the restaurant, Angelo, makes his own connotation based on his personal conventions and decodes that when Sherlock Holmes eats at a restaurant in the evening with another man it must be a date. Watson does not want to enhance that image of the pair being on a romantic date since he is not homosexual. This creates a humorous moment which this television series incorporates throughout the episodes and seasons. The conversation at the restaurant continues and Watson wants to know about Holmes' dating life:

[...]

HOLMES: What do people have, then, in their... 'real lives'?

WATSON: Friends? People they know, people they like, people they don't like... Girlfriends, boyfriends?

HOLMES: Yes, well, as I was saying, dull.  
WATSON: You don't have a girlfriend, then?  
HOLMES: Girlfriends? No, not really my area.  
WATSON: Mm. Oh, right. Do you have a boyfriend? Which is fine, by the way.  
HOLMES: I know it's fine.  
WATSON: So you've got a boyfriend, then?  
HOLMES: No.  
WATSON: Right. OK. You're unattached. Like me. Fine. Good.  
HOLMES: John, um.. I think you should know that I consider myself married to my work and while I'm flattered, I'm really not looking for any...  
WATSON: No, I'm... not asking. No.  
[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E01, 50:21)

In this transcript, Holmes and Watson talk about Holmes' sexual orientation, but Holmes does not have one and considers himself married to his work. Furthermore, Holmes misinterprets Watson's questions and thinks that Watson is attracted to him. This is a clear sign of how Watson decodes Holmes' preferences and makes his own deductions. Sherlock Holmes' and John Watson's relationship is the subject for numerous discussions ever since the original stories were published. The adaptations have since been focusing further on this special relationship and this creates additional discussions. It explains why Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss choose to incorporate the discussion within their TV-series. It is not the last time during the three seasons of *Sherlock* (2010-) that Watson is facing people's assumptions of their special relationship. Within the last couple of adaptations the relationship is essential as a trademark. The trademark is necessary since audiences decode the Sherlockian universe from it.

In his article *Adapting Doyle in the Twenty-First Century* (2013) from the book *Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle - Multi-Media Afterlives*, Bran Nicol argues that Sherlock Holmes' attraction to his consulting detective work, and how it excites Holmes, gives the character a kind of sexual satisfaction (Vanacker, 2013, p. 137). In the previous transcript, Holmes states that he considers himself married to his work which corresponds with the original Conan Doyle's stories since Holmes never marries. Nicol focuses on Benedict Cumberbatch's representation and his dramatic way of showing satisfaction when the pieces come together or a new clue is revealed. Nicol turns to Sigmund Freud's term *Epistemophilia* when he highlights Cumberbatch's 'oh's and 'ah's when doing detective work (Vanacker, 2013, p. 137). Freud terms epistemophilia as when

*[t]he thought process itself becomes sexualized, for the sexual pleasure which is normally attached to the content of thought becomes shifted on to the act of thinking itself, and the*

*satisfaction derived from reaching the conclusion of a line of thought is experienced as a sexual satisfaction.*

(Freud, 1984, p. 124)

Gatiss and Moffat's *Sherlock* (2010-) focuses a lot on the practice and how Holmes reaches his conclusions by solving the cases. This means that in regards to Freud's term epistemophilia the BBC series is hugely sexualised and it holds a greater focus than for instance the Holmes-Watson or Holmes-Adler relationship. The character of Irene Adler brings the topic of Holmes' sexual satisfaction up by saying that 'brainy is the new sexy' (Moffat, 2012, E01, 26:48). Sherlock Holmes is reinvented by Moffat and Gatiss and he is a sexual symbol in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Returning to the special relationship between Holmes and Watson, it is also integrated in *Elementary* (2012-), but in another way. The creators change the character of John Watson into a female character named Joan Watson. She is a former doctor who is currently working as a sober companion. In the light of this change, I will return to a statement from Robert Doherty that was emphasised earlier in section 1.2 *Film and TV-series adaptations* on page 6. The creators Robert Doherty and Carl Beverly want to prove that a man and a woman are able to work together without having a sexual relationship. The statement was made in an interview at Comic-con in 2012:



*[...] I knew that it would be inevitable that people would be fascinated by the 'will they, won't they'. The question came up. I like that the question is there and that it exists [...]. I don't want them to end up in bed together. That's just not what the show would go for. I don't think that would be true to the spirit of the original relationship between the two characters and that's important to me. I would like to show that a man and a woman can be friends and do this kind of work and live together and not end up romantically entangled. [...]*

(Roberts, 2012)

Beverly continues with the statement: 'Rob[ert Doherty] often calls it a bromance, but one of the bros just happens to be a woman' (ibid.). The creators want this relationship to be as close and similar as possible like the one from Conan Doyle's original stories. They achieve this with their own adaptation and

representation which incorporate a form of bromance. At first, Jonny Lee Miller's Sherlock Holmes is doubtful in regards to Joan Watson since Holmes' father employed her. As the series progresses Holmes grows fond of Joan Watson, but he never indulges in a sexual relationship with her.

The question of Sherlock Holmes' sexuality is answered quickly in this series. In the first episode, Joan Watson discovers a female leaving Holmes' house and starts questioning him about it:

[...]

WATSON: [...] I'll be available to you 24/7.

HOLMES: Do you believe in love at first sight?

WATSON: Um...

HOLMES: I know what you're thinking: the world is a cynical place and I must be a cynical man, thinking a woman like you would fall for a line like that. [Moving closer to Watson] Thing is... it isn't a line, so please hear me when I say this. [Standing right in front of Watson] I have never loved anyone as I do you right now... in this moment.

[Holmes turns on one of the TV screens and this exact monologue is playing. He has been trying to memorise it completely]

[...]

WATSON: There was a woman leaving just as I got here. Did she get you high?

HOLMES: Actually, about six feet. [A pair of fluffy handcuffs is shown] I actually find sex repellent. All those fluids and all the sounds, but my brain and my body require it to function at optimum levels, so I feed them as needed. You're a doctor, you understand.

[...]

(Doherty, 2012, E01, 2:33)

In the beginning, the audience is lead to believe that Holmes is in love with Watson. However, this is not true which creates an amusing situation based on the speculations of the Holmes-Watson relationship. The humorous aspect is also underlined in the way Holmes' lack of social skills makes him unknowingly funny for the audiences. He is not aware of the fact that a man should not say this to a woman without meaning it, otherwise it hurts her feelings. However, the sexuality of Holmes is quickly revealed and it takes the audiences by surprise. The character of Sherlock Holmes is connected with several trademarks and one of them is asexuality. This trademark is changed and also the level of connotation for many of the viewers. Viewers with the right background knowledge know that Holmes is normally asexual. This collides with the pre-existing connotations and these must be changed. Holmes admits having a sexual relationship with a woman, but since he does not like engaging in sex, he rationalises it. He feels obligated to engage in sexual activities since his body and brain requires it in order to function at an optimal level. Still, he does not turn to Joan Watson when it comes to having a sexual relationships and this corresponds with the idea of bromance in the TV-series.

Beverly uses the term bromance when looking at the relationship between the two main characters, but this is not the first time the relationship is categorised by using this term. Guy Ritchie's two blockbusters from 2009 and 2011 integrate the ideas of bromance to its fullest. Ritchie states in the extra material on the DVD version of *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) that he has a vision of reinventing Holmes without incorporating clichés or trademarks that embody the character (Ritchie, 2009). The question remains if it is possible to shed all of the trademarks or if it is necessary to incorporate some of them?

Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law have the leading roles in Ritchie's adaptations. In previous adaptations, Dr. Watson is often depicted as an overweight, middle-aged man, but Ritchie has casted Law who 10 years ago was named the sexiest man (People, 2004). Downey Jr. is the bad boy of Hollywood due to his drug abuse and imprisonment and he transfers this aspect to the character. Holmes is more capable of using his martial arts when going into a fight causing the character to be more of an action hero. Watson is also more action minded and he often carries a firearm. In *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), Law often shoots his weapon and even a canon in order to rescue Holmes from Moriarty (Ritchie, 2011).

The two main actors create a special relationship both on screen and off screen and the original Holmes-Watson relationship is maintained. The two men establish their relationship within the first minutes of *Sherlock Holmes* (2009):

[...]  
[Holmes and Watson are suffocating a man]  
WATSON: I like the hat.  
HOLMES: Uh, I just picked it up.  
WATSON: You remembered your revolver?  
HOLMES: Uh.. knew I forgot something. I thought I left the stove on.  
WATSON: You did!  
[Man gets unconscious]  
HOLMES: I think that's quite enough. You are a doctor after all.  
[They both let go of the man]  
HOLMES: Always nice to see you, Watson  
[...]

(Ritchie, 2009, 3:00)

In this transcript, the two men bicker on each other and they sound like a married couple. It is the first interaction between Holmes and Watson and it sets the mood for their friendship in the film. It is very humorous and at the same time it underlines the fact that Holmes is now represented as an action hero. Throughout the two Ritchie films, Downey Jr.'s Holmes has inner monologues before a fight scene. He goes

through each step of the attack and analyses the possible outcome. However, this is further analysed in section 4.2 *Sherlock Holmes, the action hero* where quotes and transcripts from the films are examined.

In the film, there are several discussions that all question their bond and make audiences wonder if they are only friends. The two male characters often stand very close together or even within each other's personal spheres. In *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), Sherlock Holmes comes to rescue Mary Morstan and John Watson on their honeymoon and the whole scene embody the new trademarks which this master's thesis examines. Holmes comes dressed as a woman, the scene is action packed with gun shootings on a high speeding train, and there are hints to Holmes' sexuality. At some point, Watson and Holmes fight and they lie on top of each other. Watson pulls Holmes' brassiere off and Watson's head ends up between Holmes' legs (Ritchie, 2011, 44:00). On an unconscious level, this illustrates that Holmes and Watson has a relationship since there are many symbols in the scene. Examples being Holmes dressing as a woman with heavy makeup and Watson and Holmes who are standing close together. Lastly, there is a camera-shot between Holmes' legs where the viewers are shown a device that he uses in order to escape (Ritchie, 2011, 45:38).



Thompson, 2011

The previous transcripts hold the same connotations and signs as does the relationship between Holmes and Watson. In regards to semiotics, a sign is recognisable by others and this bickering on each other is a sign of a couple who have been married a long time and argue over everything. Holmes and Watson sound like a couple who know each other and their daily routines very well. This creates a humorous situation that underlines the unique relationship between Holmes and Watson.

The next transcript plays with the fact that the two characters have known each other for a long time. Holmes and Watson are both placed in prison after having destroyed a ship hangar where Holmes initiated a fight. Holmes nearly kills himself, but Watson rescues him once more.

[...]

WATSON: I haven't slept all night. Not a wink. [Holmes yawns] Why I ever believed... that I would get to have tea with Mary's parents,... is beyond me having been talked into going with you.

HOLMES: We were set upon a man, it was self-defence.

WATSON: I've been reviewing my notes of our exploits over the last seven months. Would you like to know my conclusion? I am psychologically disturbed.

HOLMES: How so?

WATSON: Why else would I continually be led into situations where you deliberately, withhold your plans for me? Why else?

HOLMES: You never complained about my methods before.  
WATSON: I'm not complaining.  
HOLMES: You're not? What do you call this?  
WATSON: How.. how am I complaining? I never complain... When do I ever complain about you practicing the violin at three in the morning? Or your mess, your general lack of hygiene, or the fact that you steal all my clothes?  
HOLMES: We have a barter system.  
WATSON: When do I complain about you setting fire to my rooms?  
HOLMES: *Our* rooms.  
WATSON: The rooms. When do I ever complain that you experiment on my dog?  
HOLMES: *Our* dog.  
WATSON: On the... the dog!  
HOLMES: Gladstone is our dog!  
WATSON: Where I do take issue is your campaign to sabotage my relationship with Mary.  
[Holmes takes a moment to think]  
HOLMES: I understand.  
WATSON: Do you?  
HOLMES: I do.  
WATSON: I don't think you do.  
HOLMES: You're overly tired.  
WATSON: Yes.  
HOLMES: You're feeling a bit sensitive.  
WATSON: I'm not sensitive.  
HOLMES: What you need is rest. My brother, Mycroft, has a small estate near Chichester. Beautiful grounds... There's a falling. We could throw a lamb on the spit.  
WATSON: We? Holmes, if I were to go to the country, it would be with my future wife.  
HOLMES: Well certainly, if we must...  
WATSON: No not you, Mary and I. You are not...  
HOLMES: What? Invited? Why would I not be invited to my own brother's country home, Watson? Now, you are not making any sense!  
WATSON: You're not human!  
[...]

(Ritchie, 2009, 53:22)

Holmes has an illusion about him and Watson being a couple who share certain aspects in their lives. He is ignorant and makes the whole situation awkward and humorous by being delusional. He believes that it is *their* rooms and *their* dog while none of that is true. Additionally, this also emphasises a comical features in the representation of Holmes.

As mentioned earlier (p. 14) Ritchie wants to reinvent Holmes and therefore avoids the usual trademarks associated with the character: thus by doing so, Ritchie creates one of the most prominent bromance relationships on screen and he keeps the trademark of the relationship and the asexuality. Holmes still got eyes for Irene Adler while working closely together with Watson.

Additionally, *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) incorporates Mycroft Holmes who is represented by Stephen Fry. The two brothers have a love-hate relationship and the director comes up with a humorous feature. It is often suggested in the films that Sherlock Holmes is homosexual while the sexuality of Mycroft Holmes is never revealed; however, Stephen Fry is open about being homosexual. He is comfortable with his own body and displays it in the film. He surprises Morstan in one scene by walking naked around while his nearly blind butler is present and the whole scene is awkward (Ritchie, 2011).

#### 4.1.2 *Sherlock and his women*

This concludes this section where the focus was on the man in Sherlock Holmes' life. This chapter goes on to focus on the women that are a part of the iconic character's existence. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's short story *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1892) features a love interest for Holmes. It was the first short story to be published after two successful novels with Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. Irene Adler appears in this short story and she ends up deceiving both the King of Bohemia and the consulting detective. Holmes refers to her as *The Woman* (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 117) and she is one of the trademarks from the Sherlockian universe. She is featured in many adaptations and most of them stay true to the fact that she and Holmes will not be together. In the short story *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1892), Irene Adler flees from England, thereby leaving Sherlock Holmes. She leaves a note stating that she does not intend to use some compromising photographs and she will not contact the King. The King of Bohemia is astounded by Adler and affirms that it is a shame that Adler is not at his level to which Holmes coldly agrees (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 130-1). In director Guy Ritchie's adaptations, the character of Adler is killed by Moriarty which the creator of *Elementary* (2012-) Robert Doherty uses figuratively in his adaptation. In the TV-series *Sherlock* (2010-), Irene Adler also flees England and is nearly killed at the end of the episode *A Scandal in Belgravia* (2012), but Holmes rescues her from being decapitated.

When seeing the different women in the adaptations, they are always beautiful and attractive. This makes sense since the directors and creators of these films and TV-series try to sell a product. However, another angle is present since one of the adaptations, *Elementary* (2012-) integrate in its representation of Sherlock Holmes. When seeing sex from a biological perspective, it is necessary in order for the human species to function and survive. This is one way of looking at it while older adaptations stay clear from letting Holmes engage in a female relationship. The older adaptations include Paul Annett's TV-series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984-85) which star Jeremy Brett and David Burke.

Irene Adler is present in both of Guy Ritchie's adaptations of Sherlock Holmes. It is clear that Robert Downey Jr.'s Holmes is fascinated and in love with the female character. He keeps a case file on her, they share kisses, and are flirtatious towards each other in the films. Furthermore, Adler double-crosses Holmes and he ends up chained, nearly naked in a hotel-room only covering his private parts with a pillow. Ritchie has underlined the two character's prior history by letting Adler refer to a hotel-room as 'our old room' (Ritchie, 2009, 29:20). However, in *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), Irene Adler is unfortunately killed which of course chocks Holmes. He clearly shows emotions towards her just as in the original Conan Doyle's story *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1892). Conan Doyle's Holmes is torn between his emotionless appearance and his admiration for Irene Adler. In the beginning of this short story, Watson notices that:

*To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen, but as a love he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer - excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 117)

A prime example from *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) illustrates the love-triangle that Holmes shares with Adler and Watson. The incident takes place when Holmes and Watson attempt to rescue Adler from being killed in one of Lord Blackwood's traps. The whole scene is action packed, but Holmes still manages to deliver a few humorous comments such as when Holmes tries to collect tools in order to free Adler. The tools are in Watson's belt and Holmes states that 'old boy' Watson should not get excited since Holmes is very close to Watson's private parts (Ritchie, 2009, 1:19:30). The three characters are standing very close together throughout the scene either face to face or near their genitals. This entire scene illustrates the love triangle that exists between the three characters in most of the adaptations. The character of Sherlock Holmes is categorised as a hetero-, homo-, and asexual man which this example showcases.

Even though Guy Ritchie states that he wants to avoid the clichés and trademarks that surround the character, he incorporates the character of Irene Adler. She is a symbol of Holmes' sexuality, or lack thereof, and she is the only one female who has manipulated and tricked Holmes. Robert Downey Jr. creates a representation of Sherlock Holmes with feelings towards a certain woman. In addition, Downey makes the relationship between the two characters, Holmes and Adler, seem strange. This is not the only adaptation where the representations of Irene Adler and Sherlock Holmes share an uncanny form of relationship. Irene Adler undergoes a huge transformation in the incredibly popular series *Sherlock* where she is represented as a dominatrix. Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes sees Adler in *A Scandal in Belgravia* (2012) where she appears naked. He cannot deduce anything from her which disturbs him, but he still focuses on finding the missing photos.

The differences in the adaptations underline that the literary novels and short stories are universal. Therefore, they are modernised in order to fit within a certain period as clearly seen. Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) are set in Victorian London similar to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's literary works. Steven Moffat's and Mark Gatiss' *Sherlock* (2010-) is set in 21<sup>st</sup> century London while Robert Doherty's *Elementary* (2012-) takes place in 21<sup>st</sup> century New York. It is possible for directors to modernise every aspect of the events and characters in the stories which goes to show how universal Conan Doyle's works are.

Irene Adler has a certain power over Holmes in Conan Doyle's stories and he cannot get his mind of her. This might be the reason why Moffat and Gatiss make the character of Adler into a dominatrix in *Sherlock* (2010-). According to Longman Dictionary Online, a dominatrix is 'a woman who is the stronger partner in a sadomasochistic relationship' (Longman, d). The two characters are not involved in a sexual relation, but she remains the strong part and she has an upper hand in the power struggle between her and Holmes. She ridicules Holmes by stating that he is a virgin since he does not know where to look when she is naked in front of him. However, Holmes figures that her measurements are the combination to open her safety box where a mobile phone with compromising pictures is located. The compromising pictures are never revealed, but contain sexual context between Adler and a young female from the British Royal family. The next elongated transcript illustrates the power relation that goes on between Adler and Holmes.

[...]

ADLER: Do you know the big problem with a disguise, Mr. Holmes? However hard you try, it's always a self-portrait.

HOLMES: You think I'm a vicar with a bleeding face?

ADLER: No, I think you're damaged, delusional, and believe in a higher power. In your case, it's yourself. Hmm, and somebody loves you. If I had to punch that face, I'd avoid your nose and teeth, too.

WATSON: Ha-ha! Could you put something on, please? Er, anything at all. A napkin?  
ADLER: Why? Are you feeling exposed?  
HOLMES: I don't think John knows where to look.  
ADLER: No, I think he knows exactly where to look. I'm not sure about you.  
HOLMES: If I was to look at naked women, I'd borrow John's laptop.  
WATSON: You do borrow my laptop.  
HOLMES: I confiscate it.  
[...]  
WATSON: You like policemen?  
ADLER: I like detective stories. And detectives. Brainy is the new sexy.  
[...]  
HOLMES: Any moment now something is going to happen. What?  
ADLER: The hiker is going to die.  
HOLMES: No, that's the result. What's going to happen?  
ADLER: I don't understand.  
HOLMES: Oh, well try to.  
ADLER: Why?  
HOLMES: Because you cater to the whims of the pathetic and take your clothes off to make an impression. Stop boring me and think. It's the new sexy.  
[...]  
ADLER: I'd tell you the code [to the safety box] right now, but you know what? I already have. Think.  
[...]  
ADLER: You know, I was wrong about him, He did know where to look.  
WATSON: For what, what are you talking about?  
ADLER: The key-code to my safe.  
WATSON: What was it?  
ADLER: Shall I tell him? My measurements.  
[...]

(Moffat, 2012, E01, 25:32)

The time-consuming transcript from *Sherlock* (2010-) demonstrates that she is the dominating part of the relationship and she manipulates Holmes as she pleases. There is also a tribute in the transcript to the special relationship between Watson and Holmes. Watson was forced to punch Holmes and he avoided the nose and teeth which Adler also points out. This indicates that he does not want to hurt his friends and it becomes a symbol of his love to Holmes. The transcript goes on by revealing that the alleged virgin Sherlock Holmes has never seen a naked woman and he might be uncomfortable in her present. However, this is not the case and he actually solves the matter. In regards to the problem statement, it illustrates the diversity of the characters. Even though the characters and the stories are modernised the original plotline from Conan Doyle still remains.

In regards to semiotics, Adler is a symbol of Holmes' sexuality and the character is used in order to decode Holmes' preference. In this adaptation of Irene Adler, she refers to herself as the woman who beats

Holmes (Moffat, 2012, E01, 33:56). This is clearly a reference to Conan Doyle's short story *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1892) where Watson writes:

*And that was how a great scandal threatened to affect the kingdom of Bohemia, and how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman's wit. He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of the woman.*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 131)

Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock Holmes has one more great admirer in the form of his lab assistant Molly Hooper. She is in love with him and tries to flirt with him, but every attempt fails and she often ends up being humiliated by him. There are two possible ways of looking at Hooper's failed attempts. One is that Holmes unconsciously represses homosexual features since he cannot decode Hooper's signals and the other way of seeing it is as an example of Holmes' lack of social skills. He is not able to decode the signs that she sends and thus the situations becomes awkward. His background knowledge does not include sexual relationship or flirtatious situations. Therefore, he cannot deduce the meanings that she conveys. The first incident occurs in the episode *A Study in Pink* (2010):

[...]

[Holmes beats a corpse with a riding crop]

HOOPER: So, bad day, was it?

HOLMES: I need to know what bruises form in the next 20 minutes. A man's alibi depends on it. Text me.

HOOPER: Listen, I was wondering. Maybe later, when you're finished...

HOLMES: You're wearing lipstick. You weren't wearing lipstick before.

HOOPER: I, er... I refreshed it a bit.

HOLMES: Sorry, you were saying?

HOOPER: I was wondering if you'd like to have coffee?

HOLMES: Black, two sugars, please. I'll be upstairs.

[...]

HOLMES: Ah, Molly, coffee, thank you. What happened to the lipstick?

HOOPER: It wasn't working for me.

HOLMES: Really? I thought it was a big improvement. Your mouth's too small now.

HOOPER: OK.

[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E01, 8:50)

Hooper desperately tries to get Holmes on a coffee-date, but due to his lack of social skills he does not decode the message and the whole situation becomes humorous. Again, Holmes is not able to decode the signals, but it is amusing for the audiences who can decode the signals and understand the messages. Another love interest from *Sherlock* (2010-) is Janine who is in a relationship with Holmes at the end of season three. It is clearly indicated in the episode *His Last Vow* (2014) where the two characters have a sexual relationship and Holmes asks her for her hand in marriage. However, it turns out that the whole relationship was an act in order for Holmes to get closer to his enemy Charles A. Magnusson. This again shows that sex is not important to Sherlock Holmes and he is able to manage a whole life without sex as long as his life contains enough adventures.

In *Elementary* (2012-), Sherlock Holmes has several sexual relationships with multiple women, most being prostitutes. One example is in the previous transcript on page 30 where Holmes explains his relation to sex. Holmes is also comfortable with naked women which the fourteenth episode *The Deductionist* (2012) illustrates. The episode starts with a scene where Holmes is surrounded by strippers. He is not uncomfortable, but looks as if he enjoys the show. It turns out to be in connection to a case, but he is still at ease with the situation and the women. In the episode *The Leviathan* (2012), Watson runs into several women in the house and all of them are wearing minimal clothing. The sexual relationships are necessary since his body requires it to function, but he is repelled by the sexual actions. Nevertheless, the most prominent relationship in this series is the one he shares with Irene Adler. The directors reinvent the story and make a plot twist by turning Holmes' admiration Irene Adler and his greatest enemy Moriarty into the same character. Moriarty is normally represented by a male character, but in this case the directors choose a female character. This notion underlines the discussion about Sherlock Holmes being homosexual or even bisexual. This is further explained in the next chapter that deals with Sherlock Holmes' relationship with Professor Moriarty.

#### 4.1.3 *The archenemy Professor Moriarty*

Despite the fact that Moriarty is only mentioned a few times in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, the professor is memorable and is the archenemy for Sherlock Holmes in many of the adaptations. Moriarty is often portrayed as a man with an elaborate plan. In Conan Doyle's *The Final Problem* (1894), Holmes describes him as following:

*"He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has*

*a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organized. Is there a crime to be done, a paper to be abstracted, we will say, a house to be rifled, a man to be removed - the word is passed to the Professor, the matter is organized and carried out. The agent may be caught. In that case money is found for this bail or defence. But the central power which uses the agent is never caught - never so much as suspected. This was the organization which I deduced, Watson, and which I devoted my whole energy to exposing and breaking up. [...]*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 437)

Jonny Lee Miller's American Sherlock Holmes tries to capture the mysterious M who is believed to be responsible for the disappearing and apparent death of Holmes' girlfriend Irene Adler. It turns out that Adler is not dead, but she is using this alias and is actually Jamie Moriarty. Holmes has thereby been sleeping with both Adler and his archenemy Moriarty. Consequently, the power balance between them changes. The female character has complete control over Holmes as she manipulates him. This combination of the iconic Sherlock Holmes' love and archenemy has never been done in adaptations before and it is an interesting feature to incorporate. It sets a higher focus on the aspect of sexuality and Moriarty as a symbol changes meaning. Moriarty previously symbolised an archenemy both for Holmes and Watson, but also for audiences and now the character of Moriarty is a sign of affection and love. The meaning of a symbol can change over time and this is what Robert Doherty tries to incorporate in his TV series *Elementary* (2012-). Once again this kind of transformation shows the diversity of Conan Doyle's literary works. In regards to the problem statement for this thesis, it is significant that Robert Doherty alters Sherlock Holmes' archenemy. Thereby he demonstrates how universal all of the characters are. In the adaptations it shows the different representations and that they all work well in accordance to the audiences.

Doherty is not the first director to place a more feminine touch to the character of Professor Moriarty. Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat use a male character that incorporates female characteristics in his representation. Andrew Scott plays Jim Moriarty in *Sherlock* (2010-) and when Holmes first sees Moriarty, he pretends to be Molly Hooper's boyfriend who is clearly homosexual and in love with Holmes.

[...]

MORIARTY: Oh, sorry, I didn't...

HOOPER: Jim, hi! Come in! Jim, this is Sherlock Holmes

[...]

MORIARTY: Hi. So, you're Sherlock Holmes. Molly's told me all about you. You on one of your cases?

HOOPER: Jim works in IT, upstairs. That's how we met. Office romance.

HOLMES: [mumbles] Gay.

[...]

HOOPER: What do you mean, gay? We're together.

HOLMES: And domestic bliss must suit you, Molly. You've put on three pounds since I last saw you.

[...]

HOOPER: He's not gay! Why do you have to spoil...? He's not!

HOLMES: With that level of personal grooming?

WATSON: Because he puts a bit of product in his hair? I put product in my hair.

HOLMES: You wash your hair, there's a difference. No, no - tinted eyelashes, clear signs of taurine cream around the frown lines. Those tired, clubber's eyes. Then there's his underwear.

HOOPER: His underwear?

HOLMES: Visible above the waistline. Very visible. Very particular brand. That plus the extremely suggestive fact that he just left his number under this dish. I'd say you'd better break it off now and save yourself the pain.

[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E03, 18:07)

Sherlock Holmes believes that he decodes the meaning behind the man Jim Moriarty, but he decodes the message wrong. Moriarty portrays being homosexual in such a manner that he manipulates Holmes into believing it. Holmes' methods of deductions are mistaking and it haunts him in the entire episode. When implementing Roland Barthes' theory of denotation and connotation, the level of denotation, in regards to Moriarty, shows that he apparently is a homosexual man since he dresses in a certain way. The level of connotation is based on Holmes' personal conventions. It states that he has met homosexual men that have dressed this way and therefore decodes that Moriarty is in love with Holmes. Moriarty manipulates Holmes and he wants to display the detective as a fraud.

As mentioned previously, Scott's representation of Moriarty contains more feminine features. His voice is more quirky, feminine, and has a high pitch while Cumberbatch's character has a deep masculine voice. The first time Moriarty speaks to Holmes, although through another's voice, he calls Holmes 'sexy' (Moffat, 2010, E03). The professor moves like a snake and often stands close to or even in Holmes' personal sphere (Porter, 2012, p. 19). The arch enemies are each other's opposites, but Holmes is still fascinated with Moriarty. Holmes expresses that he finds Moriarty's bombing plan genius to the amazement of Watson and Detective Lestrade. Moreover, the incident underscores Holmes' lack of social skills since he admits this in front of others.

Joseph Kestner analyses Sherlock Holmes' masculinity in his book *Sherlock's Men: Masculinity, Conan Doyle, and Cultural History* (1997). He argues that Holmes is a cultural icon that holds qualities that being masculine required in the Victorian society. These cultural qualities include 'observation, rationalism, factuality and logic, comradeship, daring and pluck (Kestner, 1997, p. 2). If the character of Sherlock Holmes embodies all of the masculine values, it is no wonder that both Irene Adler and Professor Moriarty embody

most of the feminine features. In the various adaptations, the feminine characters try to seduce and manipulate Holmes in some way or another.

#### *4.1.4 Partial conclusion*

Sherlock Holmes' sexuality is one of the trademarks to the iconic character. This thesis incorporates transcripts from different film and TV-series adaptations that all illustrate that Holmes does not have any apparent and clear sexual identity. It is intriguing for audiences to try and figure out if the icon is homo-, hetero-, bi-, or even asexual. Directors, producers, and actors try to give their view on it. If Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote the stories of Sherlock Holmes with the potential discussions from the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act in mind, it is not easily confirmed. The original speculations about the sexual identity of Holmes are a part of the newer representations and adaptations as stated in section 4.1.1 *Holmes and the man in his life*. The trademark of sexuality is incorporated in order for audiences to decode the adaptations and understand that the films or TV-series are adaptations and representations of the iconic characters of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.

## **4.2 Sherlock Holmes, the action hero**

This analytical chapter proceeds by focusing on the character of Sherlock Holmes as an action hero. Holmes is a cultural icon with a variety of trademarks, most of them being contributed by others than his creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sidney Paget was the first to give the consulting detective new trademarks for instance the much discussed deerstalker. Adaptations have since added and removed trademarks and renewed Holmes in order for the character to compel to a certain audience. In the recent adaptations Sherlock Holmes is more violent and he is not afraid of fighting with his bare hands or with weapons. This chapter of the analysis demonstrates why Conan Doyle's character is categorised as an action hero based on the adaptations from director Guy Ritchie. The actors Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law present Sherlock Holmes and John Watson in a more modern way. Examples are Holmes' bohemian clothing style, the black magic which is incorporated, and both of the characters' snappy comments towards each other.

### *4.2.1 The universal character*

As pointed out, the character of Sherlock Holmes is transformed numerous times in many different genres. Due to the character's diversity many people around the world know the British iconic figure. This

expresses how universal the character is and how Holmes can be transformed and modernised in order to fit within a modern time frame. Audiences accept the sexually active Holmes in the representation by Jonny Lee Miller, the comical representation offered by Benedict Cumberbatch, and the action-hero presented by Robert Downey Jr..

In Kateryna Shadrina's article *Social Hero Evolution in Mass Universal Cinema XX-XXI Centuries* (2014); she points to the fact the cinema functions as a mirror that highlights the modern era's development and decline (Shadrina, 2014, p. 67). The current world is detected in the films which function as a media in order to get a certain idea or value across to the audiences (ibid.). This point is important when trying to examine why the recent adaptations of Sherlock Holmes are more action packed and dramatised. The 21<sup>st</sup> century apparently needs an action hero which also explains the boom in Marvel's adaptations of their superheroes.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is a time period filled with concepts such as *terror* and *war* filling headlines in newspapers and on the Internet. The world has been attacked several times in the first fourteen years of this century which calls for real life super- and action-heroes. This might be a reason why superheroes have such an influence in films in this period. The character of Sherlock Holmes has not avoided the superhero modernisation. The transformation is not easy and Shadrina underlines this by saying:

*In order to become a truly iconic movie character, it is not enough just to come up with the name and adventure. Hero is a complex image, similar to the real person, and many of its features must also be as close to reality as possible. Hero has its own motivation, hierarchy of values, its mental peculiarity and social needs. Hero is the print of a real person on the digital media.*

(Shadrina, 2014, p. 67)

Shadrina points out the important values that an iconic superhero must fulfil and the character of Sherlock Holmes certainly embodies all of these characteristics. Yet, a superhero also needs to have superpowers in order to help the needing citizens. Holmes does not have the classic superhero powers such as strength, x-ray vision, or being able to fly. However, Holmes develops powers of his own by using deductions and super-human observation skills.

One of the reasons why the 21<sup>st</sup> century needs Sherlock Holmes is answered in this section. The world needs a superhero who rescues the civilisation from the apparent dangers. In 2014, Journalist David Stephenson writes that 'Sherlock [Holmes] is the closest thing we have to a British superhero. He is like a

clever, educated Bond who is one step ahead of everyone [...]’ (Stephenson, 2014). Sherlock Holmes embodies the traits of being a superhero and rescues the world from some of its dangers.

#### 4.2.2 Power of deduction and observations

Sherlock Holmes' science of deduction is included in all of the three adaptations that are integrated in this analytical chapter. Deduction is defined as a process where one uses knowledge and information in order to understand a message or sign. It is first mentioned in Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) where John Watson reads an article written by Holmes named *the Science of Deduction and Analysis*. After having read the article, Watson exclaims that he has '[...] never read such rubbish in my life' (Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 17). John Watson dismisses the science until Sherlock Holmes demonstrates it. Holmes' methods of deduction are compared with semiotics as described on page 20. He deduces traces and clues that others cannot see. The objects that are a part of Holmes' cases and investigations hold signs that the character decodes based on his personal conventions. Holmes is quick at deducing signs which makes him an excellent consulting detective. However, he has not been able to deduce the social codes that are required of him in order to function with other people.

In addition, Conan Doyle manages to create a short story in which Sherlock Holmes's method of deduction fails. The short story *The Adventures of the Yellow Face* (1893) contains the literary image of a failing Holmes who uses his method incorrectly. The case is solved anyway, but Holmes feels defeated. In the end, Holmes states that

*"Watson," said he, "if it should ever strike you that I am getting a little over-confident in my powers, or giving less pains to a case that it deserves, kindly whisper 'Norbury' in my ear, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 330)

Previously, it was a challenge to show Holmes' methods to cinema audiences. Holmes' ways of using deduction are published in several of Conan Doyle's stories such as *The Adventures of the Blue Carbuncle* (1892). In this short story, Holmes teaches Watson to read the signs of a hat. Due to Watson's lack of experience and knowledge, he deduces very little. *Sherlock* (2010-) modernises this episode where Benedict Cumberbatch's explains the signs that a pair of shoes contain:

[...]

HOLMES: Go on, then [hands Watson the shoe].

WATSON: Hmm?  
HOLMES: You know what to do. Off you go.  
WATSON: Oh... no.  
HOLMES: Go on.  
WATSON: I'm not going to stand here so you can humiliate me while I try and disseminate...  
HOLMES: An outside eye, a second opinion. It's very useful to me.  
WATSON: Yeah, right.  
HOLMES: Really!  
WATSON: Fine. Oh, they're just a pair of shoes. Trainers!  
HOLMES: Good.  
WATSON: Umm... They're in good nick. I'd say they were pretty new, expect the sole has been well worn, so the owner must have had them for a while. Er, very '80s. Probably one of those retro designs.  
HOLMES: You're on sparkling form. What else?  
WATSON: They're quite big. A man's.  
HOLMES: But...  
WATSON: But there's traces of a name inside in felt-tip. Adults don't write their names inside their shoes, so these belong to a kid.  
HOLMES: Excellent. What else?  
WATSON: Er.. that's it.  
HOLMES: That's it?  
WATSON: How did I do?  
HOLMES: Well, John. Really well. I mean, you missed almost everything of importance, but, you know... the owner loved these. Scrubbed them clean. Whitened them where they got discoloured. Changed the laces three... no, four times. Even so, there are traces of his flaky skin where his fingers have come in contact with them, so he suffered from eczema. The shoes are well worn, more so on the inner side which means the owner had weak arches. British-made, 20 years old.  
WATSON: 20 years?  
HOLMES: They're not retro, they're original. Limited edition, two blue stripes, 1989.  
[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E03, 19:55)

This relatively long transcript demonstrates Holmes' 'powers' and it is clear that Watson does not possess the same abilities. Sherlock Holmes has developed his special skills and he quickly deduces certain signs from the shoes that create meaning for him. Director Guy Ritchie includes the science of deduction in his adaptations too, but he renews this trademark as well. The opening scene of *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) sets the mood for the film, but it also shows a first glimpse into the head of the consulting detective. Robert Downey Jr.'s representation of Holmes stands face to face with a henchman and is about to fight him. In his inner monologue, Holmes goes through the different steps in his plan and examines the possibilities of success and failure.

HOLMES: Head cocked to the left, partial deafness in ear. First point of attack. Two, throat. Paralyze vocal cords. Stop screaming. Three, got to be a heavy drinker. Floating rib to the liver. Four, finally, dragging left

leg. Fist to patella. Summary of prognosis, conscious in 90 seconds. Martial efficacy, quarter of an hour. Full faculty recovery, unlikely.

(Ritchie, 2009, 1:38)

This monologue is the first of several in both films where Holmes examines his rate of success before an attack. It shows how he is able to use his knowledge about martial arts, the human body, his opponent, and himself. It is an insight in his way of thinking and it is made visible in Guy Ritchie's films. However, it was a challenge to incorporate this within the films since an adaptation needs to be close to the original material in order for it to be recognisable to the audiences.

Robert Downey Jr.'s Sherlock Holmes comments on his powers of observations in the adaptation from 2011, *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*. Holmes tries to unravel Moriarty's plan at a peace conference and while Holmes dances with his female clients, Madam Simza, they talk about his powers:

[...]

[Sherlock Holmes focuses on the crowd who stand at the dance floor]

SIMZA: What do you see?

HOLMES: Everything.

[The camera cuts back and forth between Holmes, the crowd, and smaller details and movements]

HOLMES: That is my curse.

SIMZA: But you don't see what you are looking for?

[...]

(Ritchie, 2011, 1:40:37)

Sherlock Holmes considers his powers of deduction as being a curse, but he understands the necessity of them. Holmes is not able to solve his cases without these powers, but the audiences get to understand that Holmes does not enjoy them at any cost.

Sherlock Holmes has never been portrayed in such a manner before and the plots from the original Conan Doyle stories do often not contain much violence or sexual context. Many of Conan Doyle's stories contain the same plot where the stories start out in Baker Street with Holmes and Watson interviewing a client. Hereafter, Holmes and Watson start their adventure and the story ends up with the case being solved. This is nearly the complete opposite to Ritchie's adaptations where especially violence often is incorporated in the manuscript. The director's manuscript is filled with drama, several conflicts and issues, and of course

action scenes and the two films end on a fairly happy note. Despite the differences between Conan Doyle's and Ritchie's story-lines, Ritchie creates the perfect balance between the two versions of the consulting detective.

This last paragraph in section 4.2.2 *Power of deduction and observations* focuses a bit further on Ritchie's way of reinventing Sherlock Holmes as the ultimate action hero. Guy Ritchie casted Robert Downey Jr. as the character of Holmes and this adds to the viewers' acceptance of this action based consulting detective. Downey Jr. is also featured in the hugely popular adaptations of *Iron Man* where he stars as the superhero. Furthermore, Downey Jr. is notorious in Hollywood for being a bit unconventional himself, his drug abuse, and being familiar with martial arts (Shadrina, 2014, p. 47). These personal values connected to Downey Jr.'s persona help audiences to accept Sherlock Holmes as an action hero.



WoDu Media, 2009

#### 4.2.3 *Partial conclusion*

The character of Sherlock Holmes receives a new trademark where he is being labelled as an action-hero. The definition of a hero, as Kateryna Shadrina points out in section 4.2.1, harmonises with the description of Holmes and it shows how universal the iconic character is. Audiences accept the more action packed story plot and character since the representation still keeps in touch with Conan Doyle's original stories. An action-hero carries meanings for people in many different parts of the world. Clearly, Guy Ritchie manages to fit the character of Holmes within these conventions.

### 4.3 **The great comedian, Mr. Holmes**

The character of Sherlock Holmes is a universal icon which is transformed into many different variations as shown in this analytical chapter. Another trademark that the character is given following the recent adaptations is the label of being a comedian. All of the three adaptations that are incorporated in this thesis have included humorous moments with Sherlock Holmes. It is sometimes in regards to Holmes' lack of social skills that he becomes entertaining for the audiences that do know how to decode social messages. However, most of the times the comical moments come when Holmes is revealing how ignorant the people around him are. He displays his intelligence which makes others baffled.

### 4.3.1 *The intelligent and witty Holmes*

There are millions of links on the Internet where a hilarious and witty representation of Sherlock Holmes is displayed for the readers or viewers. This tendency underlines the fact that Holmes is funnier in the recent adaptations. This thesis integrates many transcripts with an amusing disposition and many of them often incorporate a Sherlock Holmes who displays his high intellect in the present of others.

An example from the American adaptation *Elementary* (2012-) comes at the beginning of the pilot episode. Jonny Lee Miller's representation of Sherlock Holmes must introduce Lucy Liu's Watson at a crime scene:

[...]

HOLMES: Tell me, how do clients typically introduce you?

WATSON: What do you mean?

HOLMES: I-I mean I find it hard to believe they'd actually tell someone that they've been assigned a glorified helper monkey.

WATSON: Helper monkey? Well, you and I have what's known as companion/client confidentiality which means that you can introduce me however you like. Friend, co-worker, relative, and I'll play along. But to be honest, most clients just call me their companion.

HOLMES: Hmm. Captain Gregson.

GREGSON: Ah. Holmes. How you doing?

HOLMES: Miss Watson, this is Captain Gregson. Captain Gregson, this is Miss Watson, my personal valet.

[...]

(Doherty, 2012, E01, 6:19)

Sherlock Holmes is in doubt as to how he should introduce his sober companion, but he chooses to introduce Watson as a personal valet. This shows that Holmes thinks quickly in a stressed situation and that he is indeed a comedian on screen.

The British adaptation of Conan Doyle's original stories is BBC's TV series *Sherlock* (2010-) which incorporates multiple comical moments in each of the episodes. The plot twists several times during an episode and the mood switches equally. This transcript shows how quickly Sherlock Holmes changes and adapts to the situation:

[...]

HUDSON: What about these suicides, then, Sherlock? I thought that'd be right up your street. Three exactly the same.

HOLMES: Four. [Looks out the window and sees a police car.] There's been a fourth. And there's something different this time.

HUDSON: A fourth?

[A police man enters the flat]  
HOLMES: Where?  
LESTRADE: Brixton, Lauriston Gardens.  
HOLMES: What's new about this one? You wouldn't have come to get me if there wasn't something different.  
LESTRADE: You know how they never leave notes? This one did. Will you come?  
HOLMES: Who's on forensics?  
LESTRADE: Anderson.  
HOLMES: He doesn't work well with me.  
LESTRADE: Well, he won't be your assistant.  
HOLMES: I need an assistant.  
LESTRADE: Will you come?  
HOLMES: Not in a police car, I'll be right behind.  
LESTRADE: Thank you.  
[The police man leaves and Holmes starts smiling. He then jumps around the apartment, being very cheerful]  
HOLMES: Brilliant! Yes! Four serial suicides and now a note. Oh, it's Christmas. Mrs. Hudson, I'll be late. Might need some food.  
HUDSON: I'm your landlady, dead, not your housekeeper.  
HOLMES: Something cold will do. John, have a cup of tea, make yourself at home. Don't wait up!  
[...]

(Moffat, 2010, E01, 15:13)

This transcript demonstrates that Cumberbatch's 21<sup>st</sup> century Sherlock Holmes is intelligent. Holmes deduces that Detective Inspector Lestrade desperately needs him since there is a development in the suicides. On the other hand, Holmes exhibits that he is not capable of decoding the social message and codes in society. It is not acceptable behaviour to jump around and cheer during a series of horrible death. However, Holmes is intelligent enough that he waits until Lestrade is gone from the apartment and he does not reveal his real feelings until he is among people whom he trusts.

This is not the last time in the TV-series that Sherlock Holmes displays his lack of social skills and exclaims that he enjoys elements that are not part of normal human manners. In the third episode of the first series *The Great Game* (2010), Sherlock is fascinated with Jim Moriarty's bombing plan and displays this in front of members of the police force and John Watson. He immediately turns to Watson and asks if it is not acceptable to speak up about it where Watson confirms that it is not normal conduct.

The last two film adaptations from director Guy Ritchie, *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), incorporate humour as well. One of the incidents occurs when Irene Adler tricks Holmes. She poisons a bottle of wine and Holmes falls asleep. When he wakes up, he is chained to a bedpost while being naked and with a pillow to cover his private parts. A maid enters the room and Holmes

delivers his punch line: '[...] I'm a professional. Beneath this pillow lies the key to my release'. (Ritchie, 2009, 1:07:50). The situation is clearly uncomfortable for the maid, but Holmes reacts as nothing special has happened. This is again a way of showing that Holmes cannot decode the message that society has since he does not have the personal conventions to do so.



Wodu Media, 2009

#### 4.3.2 *Partial conclusion*

The previous section shows that the character of Sherlock Holmes is a comedian and this new trademark is incorporated in many adaptations. The recent adaptations use the comical aspect of Holmes in order to entertain the audiences, but also to underline that Holmes does not have any particular social skills. Most of the time, Holmes displays his high intelligence by acting out in certain situations. It is a new side to Sherlock Holmes and it is an element that viewers accept. Once more this emphasises how universal and diverse the iconic British character is.

## 5. Conclusion

The final chapter concerns conclusions and presents main findings which this thesis engenders in the analytical chapter. Lastly, research questions for a future study on the subject of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and the adaptations are put forward. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the following problem statement:

When viewing the more recent film and TV-adaptations, how is it possible to view Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's literary works with the character of Sherlock Holmes as a cultural and universal text? It is obvious to see that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character receives new trademarks in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, this master's thesis wishes to illustrate and analyse the changes experienced in connection to Sherlock Holmes and thus examine why these changes are possible.

In order to answer this problem statement, I discussed and answered the following sub-questions in the analytical chapter:

- How is Sherlock Holmes' sexuality represented?
- How does Sherlock Holmes fulfil being categorised as an action-hero?
- What makes it possible for Sherlock Holmes to be a comedian on screen?
- Why do audiences need a consulting detective in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

I found it obvious that Conan Doyle's consulting detective has changed and received new trademarks throughout time, adaptations, and representations. Holmes' newer trademarks include his sexual identity, him being an action hero, and lastly, the humorous and comical Holmes. All of these trademarks are present in the adaptations that are included. These adaptations include Guy Ritchie's two films *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011). In addition two TV-series which include Steven Moffat's and Mark Gatiss' *Sherlock* (2010-) and Robert Doherty's *Elementary* (2012-) are included.

### 5.1 The sexual identity

Sherlock Holmes' sexuality is one of the most discussed trademarks since there is no obvious answer. The cultural icon exists in literature without any apparent sexual identity. As written in section 4.1 *Sherlock Holmes - the sex symbol*, Holmes is reduced to a certain sign which holds the signifier of asexual. The analytical chapter found that there is no ambiguous answer to Holmes' sexuality, but the adaptations made

several interpretations of this trademark. Sherlock Holmes' sexual identity is represented in many different ways as the analytical chapter portrays. Holmes' sexuality is portrayed as him being an asexual character as Conan Doyle's literary works suggest whereas the included adaptations portray his sexuality as being homosexual, a heterosexual, and bisexual. On this notion, it concludes that Holmes' sexuality cannot be defined entirely. Viewers are able to interpret the representations themselves and try to answer the question of sexuality.

In Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's literary works, Sherlock Holmes and John Watson share an incredible bond and this is kept in all the adaptations. This means that it is obvious to interpret the two bachelors as being in a relationship. It is never stated that Sherlock Holmes is engaged in a romantic relationship with another person, but the adaptations give their visions on Holmes' sexuality. In the adaptations, Holmes transforms from an asexual literary icon into a homo- and heterosexual character.

Steven Moffat's and Mark Gatiss' BBC TV-series *Sherlock* (2010-) contains several references to Sherlock Holmes being homosexual in Benedict Cumberbatch's representation of the iconic character. It is often indicated by other characters in the series that Holmes is romantically involved with John Watson. One example comes from the landlady of Baker Street, Mrs. Hudson, who is under the assumption since the two bachelors move in together. As pointed out in the analytical chapter, multiple signs such as the usage of the spare bedroom and the candlelight dinner all symbolise and indicate that Holmes and Watson are in a relationship. However, Moffat and Gatiss continue to represent Holmes' sexuality in different ways. The character has a number of female characters that are in love with him. His lab assistant Molly Hooper is in love with Holmes and she asks him out on dates. Holmes does not know how to decode her messages since he does not have the personal conventions or experiences that are required. These situations are amusing for the audiences who do understand the messages and are able to decode them. Based on this notion, it is concluded that Cumberbatch's Holmes is not familiar with female relationships since he does not decode the signs. This suggests that Holmes is still asexual, but this changes when he, due to a case, indulges in a sexual relationship with a woman.

Robert Doherty's American adaptation *Elementary* (2012-) makes it clear that Sherlock Holmes is heterosexual. His body requires sex and therefore he feels obligated to indulge in the sexual act. It is indicated throughout the TV-series that he has sex, but he is never romantically involved with Joan Watson, who is his business partner and sober companion. Based on the discussions of the special relationship between the characters of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, the American representations could end up together. However, this is not the case and the director Robert Doherty transforms the special bond between Holmes and Watson.

Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) embrace the term of bromance. Bromance is strong emotions between two men and this is emphasised in these two blockbusters. Robert Downey Jr.'s Sherlock Holmes is clearly in love with Irene Adler, but he has strong emotions towards Jude Law's John Watson. There are numerous incidents where it is indicated that Holmes is homosexual and romantically involved with Watson. The two male characters are similar to a married couple and they often bicker and debate. Holmes' sexuality is questioned throughout the two films especially when he is dressed as a woman in the adaptation from 2011. Based on this notion, it concludes that Guy Ritchie incorporates no clear sexual identity in his adaptations which allows the audiences to interpret the question on their own.

In regards to Sherlock Holmes' sexuality, it is possible to examine how adaptable and universal the literary character is. The integrated adaptations each give a different version of Holmes' sexuality and the audiences seem to accept all of these versions. However, audiences might have a hard time placing Sherlock Holmes within a category, but this allows for further interpretations of his sexuality. The directors of these adaptations integrate the speculations and debates from the Victorian London in regards to Holmes' sexuality. Most of the adaptations stay clear from letting Sherlock Holmes engage in a clear, steady, and sexual relationship.

## 5.2 The action hero

This conclusion goes further in the analytical chapter and focuses on the aspect of whether Sherlock Holmes fulfils being categorised as an action hero. Sherlock Holmes, and especially Robert Downey Jr.'s representation of the character, is no longer afraid of fighting with his bare hands or with modern weapons. His fighting skills further develop and he is not merely an amateur fighter. Downey Jr. manages to expand Holmes' skills and combine martial arts and boxing in his adaptation. In this way, director Guy Ritchie includes a new trademark to Holmes which highlights the diversity of the iconic character.

*Sherlock* (2010-), *Elementary* (2012-), *Sherlock Holmes* (2009), and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011) all incorporate Sherlock Holmes' powers of deduction and observations. In Guy Ritchie's film from 2011, Holmes describes his power as his own curse and he sees everything. This aspect is present in all of the integrated adaptations where observations are key elements when Holmes solves his adventures and cases. Sherlock Holmes developed and coined his method of deduction in which he deduces the signs that other people are too oblivious to see. Others do not have the necessary knowledge and personal conventions to decode certain signs whereas Holmes holds a great deal of knowledge in

comparison to the average human being. This is one of the aspects that make him an excellent consulting detective.

In section 4.2.1 *The Universal character*, Kateryna Shadrina points to the fact that cinema functions as a mirror to the modern era. With this in mind, Sherlock Holmes represents the values and ideas of the current world. It also demonstrates the universality and diversity of the literary character and gives an answer as to why it is possible to modernise Sherlock Holmes to fit within the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The current world is focusing on violence and wars are being fought across the globe which must reflect Conan Doyle's character in the modern adaptations. This is one answer as to why Holmes is more action based on screen. As pointed out, Shadrina states that a 'hero is the print of a real person on the digital media' (Shadrina, 2014, p. 67). Sherlock Holmes embodies the image of an ordinary man and the characteristics of a hero, but his mind is extraordinary. His skills of observations and deductions are his super-powers. The icon character of Sherlock Holmes becomes more action based, but the representations still keep in touch with the original plot from Conan Doyle's literary stories.

### **5.3 The comedian**

This thesis wants to examine why it is possible to transform Sherlock Holmes into a comedian in the more recent adaptations. Again, this is due to the universal character and the fact that Conan Doyle's stories are viewed as cultural texts. Sherlock Holmes' lack of social skills and his lack of being able to decode certain social codes are sometimes the essential element in Holmes' humour. Other times he is intelligent enough to manipulate people and reveal them as ignorant.

Periodically, Holmes is having a hard time at decoding the social codes and messages and especially when it comes to women, he does not understand what is expected of him. This creates comical situations since the audiences are able to decode the message. One example occurs in *Sherlock* (2010-) where Molly Hooper tries to ask Holmes out on a coffee-date, but he misinterprets her signals. Besides having unfortunate incidents with women, Cumberbatch's Holmes also expresses emotions at wrong times and this can be either entertaining or to the astonishment of the viewers. This allows for the audiences to exhibit new sides and trademarks of the character which they have to interpret. The audiences understand why Holmes is fascinated by his archenemy, but his social skills do not allow him to repress such exclamations.

There is no doubt that the literary works from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle are viewed as cultural texts since they all depict elements from this modern time-period. The iconic character of Sherlock Holmes is a universal character as he has been altered from his birth over 100 years ago, but the adaptations still maintain key trademarks from the original short stories and novels. Audiences accept the different representations of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson in some of the numerous adaptations. The adaptations share one aspect in relation to the main character of Holmes and that is that the character lacks knowledge in order to decode signals in regards to social codes.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wants to depict a modern Victorian man and this trademark is still present in the recent adaptations. The male character is modern whether he is placed in Victorian London or 21<sup>st</sup> century London or New York. The newer trademarks such as his sexuality, the action hero, and the comedian begin to have a firm grip in the adaptations and this master's thesis illustrates that these three trademarks are present in all of the four films and TV-series that are incorporated. These trademarks allow audiences to acknowledge that they are viewing a representation or adaptation of Conan Doyle's loved stories and novels about the great consulting detective and his war veteran doctor.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century needs a consulting detective since the character of Holmes is a symbol of anything that the readers are not. Sherlock Holmes resembles an ordinary man and yet he is categorised as a superhero. He has the powers of deductions which save the world from its dangers and Holmes starts by solving one case at a time.

## **5.4 Further research questions**

When working with Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, new questions for further research surfaced. Sherlock Holmes has gained much popularity with the last couple of years due to many adaptations and representation. It would be interesting to examine why the consulting detective is popular and the subject for several representations in the recent years. He receives many new fans who are intrigued with the character of Holmes. In order to answer this question, it would require a survey which would take up a lot of time and it is not possible for this thesis.

In future research, one could also focus entirely on Sherlock Holmes' sexuality and examine why it is necessary to give the iconic character a sexual identity. It seems to be required in adaptations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century since there is a higher focus on sexuality. Could it be that Sherlock Holmes cannot exist in this century without having a sexual identity since it is present in most of the adaptations?

This master's thesis closes with a quote from the short story *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* (1888) where Holmes' methods are compared to the work that has gone into this thesis.

*[...] Let me run over the principle steps. We approached the case, you remember, with an absolutely blank mind, which is always an advantage. We had formed no theories. We were simply there to observe and to draw inferences from our observations.*

(Conan Doyle, 1992, p. 313)

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