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A Study in Holmes

The Iconic Detective and his Endless Travel through Time and Space.

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Sommaire

INTRODUCTION

More than a century after his own creator attempted to kill him, Sherlock Holmes seems more alive than ever. Books, comics, TV shows, movies, fan fictions, board-games and video-games…, the world-famous detective invented by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is everywhere. Every new decade seems to witness the rebirth of the character and his fascinating adventures along with the Doctor Watson. The stories are endlessly re-explored, reinvented; new ones are created, and references to the original material are to be found in even the most unexpected and random places.

How did this mere character of fiction grow into such a universal and permanent cultural figure? How did he transcend time and space to become such a symbolic figure, representing both the very image of the quintessential detective, but also a real icon of "britishness"? How can he be both the very essence of the Victorian London, and a worldwide famous, timeless figure?

To understand the "Holmes phenomenon", we will have to go back in time, to the very creation of the emblematic character. The first axis of this paper will thus explore the historical, literary and sociological context of the detective's birth, the "Victorian Holmes", and the reception he received from the original public.

The exploration of Holmes' origins will also emphasize another point, which I will develop in a second part. Indeed, the character that we know from the common representation that we all have in mind, will prove to be slightly different than the one Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created in the first place. Throughout the ages and the various adaptations that have been made of the original stories, the character has evolved, some of his traits have been diminished or even erased, his temper, his relationships, his environment…, have been developed, reinvented or extended, and, little by little, a whole "mythology" of the famous Holmes has been created. Gradually, details that were absolutely not in the Conan Doyle's short stories have become part of the "canon", and shaped the whole "Holmesian myth".

Indeed, the Victorian character went through a lot of alterations: he has been transposed, several times, into a more modern era, he has become an animal in various animated movies, he has even changed gender…; but whatever the time, place or gender, whatever the extravagances of the adaptations, and despite the liberties taken with the original stories, there is definitely something permanent about the character; some common factors can be found in this variety of adaptations, details, traits in the character and his environment that always fascinated the public, and keep fascinating people. Thus, in the third and last part of this paper, I will explore in which way the detective takes part in nowadays society, and see what remains of Sherlock Holmes, even when the character is far from his original, Victorian self.

I. "Victorian Holmes"
Context of Creation and Reception by the Original Public

A century after its first appearance, and with all the adaptations and modernizations of the character, it would be easy to forget the true origin of the famous detective. However, in order to really have a grip on who this character is, it is essential to get to know its creator, and to remember the context of its creation.

A. The Creator

Sherlock Holmes was born out of the imagination of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Even though the detective has indubitably become emblematic of England, it is interesting to know that his creator was actually Scottish. Indeed, Conan Doyle was born in 1859 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Moreover, the actual man who inspired Doyle to invent Holmes, Dr. Joseph Bell, was Scottish too: he was a surgeon and Conan Doyle's teacher at Edinburgh University, where the author attended medical school from 1876 to 1881. After he graduated, Bell appointed Conan Doyle to be his medical clerk, and this experience with this doctor allowed Doyle to get really familiar with what the surgeon called his "deduction system". The man taught Conan Doyle how he was able to deduce a lot of facts about his patients and students by observing them and asking them very simple questions. In his autobiography, Doyle wrote that he *"used and amplified his methods when in later life [he] tried to build up a scientific detective who solved cases on his own merits and not through the folly of the criminal."*[1]

Even though Conan Doyle was not unsuccessful in his medical career, it is not really something he chose out of passion. By reading his autobiography, we understand that he mostly engaged in medical studies because times were hard for his family, and he wanted to support his mother, for whom he had a great fondness and admiration.

> *My mother had been so splendid that we could not fail her. It had been determined that I should be a doctor, chiefly, I think, because Edinburgh was so famous a centre for medical learning.* [2]

Moreover, it seems that his family background gave him a taste for literature that was to prevail over his – rather little – interest for medicine. Indeed, he was the son of Charles Doyle who,

[1] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London: John Murray, 1930), chapter III

[2] *Ibid.*

himself, was raised in an artistic environment, counting his father John Doyle, a political cartoonist and his brother, Richard Doyle, a famous illustrator. Arthur Conan Doyle's mother, Mary Foley Doyle, was well-read, passionate about story-telling, genealogy as well as history, and she always encouraged her son in his appeal for literature.

Money was scarce for the young medical student, and to supplement his income, he combined the pleasant with the useful and began writing short stories for sale. His writings were based on the adventure stories that fascinated him as a child and on his own personal experiences. In 1879, he published his first short story *The Mystery of Sassasa valley,* in *Chamber's Journal.* However, as explained in his autobiography, the pieces he wrote for newspapers were not something he really valued as literary work. He wrote for newspapers such as "London Society," "All the Year Round," "Temple Bar," "The Boy's Own Paper", and barely made 15£ a year for these stories, *"so that the idea of making a living by it never occurred to [him]"* [3] at the time.

In 1882, Conan Doyle opened up his own medical practice in Portsmouth, but unfortunately, the patients were rare. During this very dull period of time, waiting for patients and profits, Conan Doyle kept writing short stories. However, after years of writing anonymous stories he did not put much credit in, Conan Doyle felt that he could really write something he would be proud of, and decided to publish a piece bearing his name. That is when he wrote *The Firm of Girdlestone*, a *"sensational book of adventure"*.[5] However, the book encountered no success amongst editors and no one was interested in publishing it. The novel already had a lot of the elements that would make Doyle's success in his Sherlock Holmes' short stories: the mystery, the crimes, the well-crafted villain… Yet, it lacked the ingredients that would make it distinctive, different from all the detective stories already existing. Conan Doyle was a little hurt by the lack of interest his work generated, but he seemed quite aware of the weaknesses that motivated the publishers' rejection: *"[…] it was too reminiscent of the work of others. I could see it then, and could see it even more clearly later."*[6]

What Conan Doyle needed, was to create a hero with very specific and original features. He was a fervent reader and a great admirer of Edgar Allan Poe and the French writer Emile Gaboriau. Influenced by Poe's French detective M. Dupin, and Gaboriau's police inspector M. Lecoq, Conan Doyle wished to create his own detective. But he needed this character to have something special that would set him apart from his fellow investigators. This is when he was

[3] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London : John Murray, 1930), chapter VIII

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Ibid.*

reminded of his former teacher, Joseph Bell, and his very singular method of deduction. *"If he were a detective he would surely reduce this fascinating but unorganized business to something nearer to an exact science."*[7] The idea was, thus, not only to tell a detective story, but also to depict a new way of investigating, and to give the details of the detective's logic through the short stories retracing his adventures. Conan Doyle thus created this character, whose deductive reasoning, temper and even physical traits were highly inspired by his former teacher: Sherlock Holmes was born.

The character of Sherlock Holmes first appeared in a short story Arthur Conan Doyle finished writing in 1886, "A Study in Scarlet". However, as surprising as it might seem from nowadays point of view, the story did not encounter the great success it would have later on. Many publishers rejected it, mainly because of its peculiar length: it was too short to be novel, but too long to be only a short story. Conan Doyle was upset and disappointed, for this time he knew his piece could really matter in the literary world. This is why he accepted the not-so tempting offer made by Ward, Lock & Company. Indeed, they offered him very little money for the publication and could not release it before the next year. Sick of rejection and certain of the quality of his work, Conan Doyle figured he might as well accept this arrangement rather than see his story end up in oblivion. "A Study in Scarlet" was thus published at the end of 1887 in the magazine*, Beeton's Christmas Annual.* The reception of the piece was rather lukewarm, and Doyle was criticized for being still very much in the shadow of his predecessors, Poe, Gaboriau and Robert Louis Stevenson.[8]

However, as explained in his autobiography, *"British literature had a considerable vogue in the United States at this time for the simple reason that there was no copyright and they had not to pay for it."* [9], and thus his *Study in Scarlet* was exported to the United States, where it encountered the enthusiasm of the American readership. Of course this meant that his popularity in the United States did not earn Conan Doyle any money, nevertheless it earned him the recognition of the American publishing house, J. B. Lippincott & Co. Consequently, after a dinner with an agent of Lippincott and other important figures of the literary world, Doyle, along with his contemporary writer and friend Oscar Wilde, agreed to write for the *Lippincott's Magazine*. Conan

[7] Ibid.

[8] William Baring-Gould, ed., Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes: The Four Novels and the Fifty-six short stories Complete* (Random House Value Publications, 1992)

[9] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London : John Murray, 1930), chapter VIII

Doyle produced "The Sign of Four", while Wilde wrote "The Picture of Dorian Gray". "The Sign of Four" marked the second appearance of Doyle's detective Sherlock Holmes and its reception by the American public was even better than the one received for his "Study in Scarlet".

Yet, success was still far ahead of him, and Conan Doyle took a break from his detective stories, pursuing his very modest medical career, and occasionally writing chivalric historical novels based on British History. Doyle considered this work as far more serious and valuable than his Holmes' stories, but they would never encounter the recognition he wanted for them; going rather unnoticed when they first came out, they were later completely outshone by the adventures of the worshiped Sherlock Holmes.

It was not before Doyle settled as an oculist in London that the idea that would allow his detective stories to finally meet the fame to which they were promised occurred to him. Indeed, his consulting room was still very much empty of patients, giving him plenty of time to think about many things. In his autobiography, he describes the conditions in which his reflection took place: *"There for £120 a year I got the use of a front room with part use of a waiting-room. I was soon to find that they were both waiting-rooms, and now I know that it was better so."*[10] During those long hours of thinking, his attention was drawn to the increasing number of monthly magazines that were coming out then, and as he considered the *"disconnected stories"* those journals featured, he had an idea:

> *[…] a single character running through a series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader, would bind that reader to that particular magazine. On the other hand, it had long seemed to me that the ordinary serial might be an impediment rather than a help to a magazine, since, sooner or later, one missed one number and afterwards it had lost all interest. Clearly the ideal compromise was a character which carried through, and yet instalments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure that he could relish the whole contents of the magazine.* [11]

Indeed, many authors, such as Charles Dickens for example, were publishing their stories for these journals. They were cutting their novels into monthly episodes, taking the risk of losing the reader if he missed one issue of the magazine. That is why Conan Doyle came up with this idea of a recurring character who would turn up in a new, independent plot every month. He approached *The Strand Magazine* with this idea, and in August 1891 he put a decisive term to his medical career, which never took off anyway, and began writing new Sherlock Holmes stories. "A Scandal

[10] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London : John Murray, 1930), chapter X

[11] Ibid.

in Bohemia" was the first story he published for *The Strand*, and within a year, Holmes had already become the phenomenon he still is nowadays.

The response received by the stories was extraordinary. From a mere character of fiction, Sherlock Holmes became a real sensation. People were sending letters to Conan Doyle asking about Holmes and sometimes even confusing the author with his narrator, Doctor Watson, begging him to ask Sherlock to solve a case for them. The misconception that Holmes was a real person was, indeed, something rather widespread, and it was evidence of the power this character had upon people's mind. In his autobiography, Conan Doyle talks about this incredible phenomenon:

> *I do not think that I ever realized what a living actual personality Holmes had become to the more guileless readers, until I heard of the very pleasing story of the char-à-banc of French schoolboys who, when asked what they wanted to see first in London, replied unanimously that they wanted to see Mr. Holmes' lodgings in Baker Street."*[12]

After writing three series of twelve Holmes stories, Conan Doyle was, as he says in his memoirs, *"weary of inventing plots"* and wanted to *"do some work which would certainly be less remunerative but would be more ambitious from a literary point of view."*[13] Conan Doyle considered the Holmes' stories as light fiction, and was more interested in writing historical novels. This is why, in the 1893 story, "The Final Problem" – a very revealing title, he decided to take his detective's life by making him jump to his death from the top of the Reichenbach Falls.

But one does not kill a phenomenon such as Sherlock Holmes so easily, and much to Conan Doyle's surprise, people were not at all ready to see their beloved hero disappearing in such tragic circumstances.

> *They say that a man is never properly appreciated until he is dead, and the general protest against my summary execution of Holmes taught me how many and how numerous were his friends. "You Brute" was the beginning of the letter of remonstrance which one lady sent me, and I expect she spoke for others besides herself.*[14]

The public reaction was, indeed, extraordinarily vehement. It is said that people wore black armbands to show their grief and that petitions to "keep Holmes alive" circulated. The announcement of the detective's death was relayed by the wire service to be reported all over the world as front-pages news. Conan Doyle finally gave in to public opinion, and, nine years after

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[12] Ibid., chapter XI

[13] Ibid.

[14] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London : John Murray, 1930), chapter X

his “Final Problem”, he brought Holmes back. "The Hound of the Baskervilles", appeared in *The Strand Magazine* between 1901 and 1902**,** but it was presented as an old case from Watson's journals, concluded before Holmes' death, and thus the detective was still not back from the dead. It was not before 1903, when he wrote "The Empty House” that Conan Doyle finally capitulated and resurrected the famous detective.

The success of the new Holmes stories was swift and without precedent, and many – Conan Doyle included – are those who wondered how and why such an extraordinarily enthusiastic response happened. The answer to that is most certainly complicated, but it is not too much to say that timing had a huge part to play in the incredible triumph of the Sherlock Holmes stories. To understand the public reaction to Conan Doyle’s detective stories, it is important to try and understand the era in which they were released.

B. 1870-1914: Victorian London

The era in which Conan Doyle evolved and created his Sherlock Holmes stories was a troubled one. It was a time of transition, of disruption and swift changes.

When the first successful Holmes stories came out, in 1891, Queen Victoria had been reigning for 54 years. Britain had experienced a tremendous growth, had a vast empire stretching around the world, and industrialization was expanding quickly. If this period of time that we later called the Victorian era was a time of optimism and prosperity for the British Empire, it was also a time of fear and anxiety. Indeed, the 19th century Industrial Revolution brought drastic changes in Victorian everyday life. The development of new technologies, machinery, production processes… was an improvement and created thousands of new job opportunities, but this also meant that people were leaving the countryside to settle in the cities. The Victorian era was the era of urbanism for England, as cities were facing an unprecedented increase of their population. London, for example, saw the number of its inhabitants grow from about one million people in 1800, to about six million in 1900. This flood of people arriving into the city centers participated in the flourishing of businesses and the rapid development of cities. However, this urban exodus was way too quick and unprepared, and it soon became clear that London could not provide decent living conditions for all of these new inhabitants. As a consequence, the city was crippled by a terrible case of urban overcrowding. Precarious buildings were constructed for the workers and their families, but living conditions were squalid. Most people were crammed in tiny, sordid one-room flats, and rents were excessively high because of high demand. Promiscuity between neighbors often led to very violent disputes, often exacerbated by drunkenness. Poverty was

increasing, widening the gap between the emerging wealthy middle-class and the poor working-class. While the most disadvantaged citizens were struggling with the devastating epidemics of cholera and typhoid striking the slums of the overcrowded East-End of London, the wealthiest were enjoying big single homes, running water, and even electricity.

However, as regards air and water pollution, no level of society was spared. Indeed, the Thames was soiled by the raw sewage that was dumped into its waters from the network of open sewers on a daily basis, despite the fact that the river was London's main source of drinking water. Running through every part of the city, the foul river was conveying a horrendous stench and a terrible cloud of contagion. As for air quality, the industrial revolution led to the development of coal as the main energy source; as a consequence to the use of coal-fired stoves, the air was rendered thick and heavy with fog.

In addition to the heavy, sordid atmosphere created by pollution, London was also a dangerous place. Indeed, the crime rate was peaking. Theft was the most common form of crime; extreme poverty led a part of the population to have recourse to larceny. People would steal in order to eat, for example. The streets were very insecure, and honest people were constantly worried about being attacked and robbed. Moreover, those attacks were very violent and often performed by several people organized in criminal gangs: assaults with chloroform used to put down the victim, bonneting – covering the prey's eyes with his own hat while robbing him – and garroting – half-strangling the victim while an accomplice robbed him – were frequent and left people with a terrible feeling of fear and insecurity.

Bloodshed and cold-blooded murders were not as frequent as the books or the newspapers from back then suggest. However, murders did happen, and prostitutes were a population that was very much exposed to street violence; many were stabbed, or strangled to death. One cannot ignore the story of Jack the Ripper for example, this mysterious murderer who butchered dozens of prostitutes. The ferocity of his killings and the fact that his identity remained an unresolved mystery participated in the climate of terror reigning in the city.

To deal with this rampant criminality, the Metropolitan Police was created in 1829. Unfortunately, the first "bobbies" – named after the founder, Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel – were not really efficient. Drunkenness was an issue affecting a great part of the population, and the police forces were not spared. Many officers had to resign because of their own alcohol abuse while on duty. Moreover, the police forces were, at the beginning, known to be both incompetent and corrupted, so that people did not trust them to deal with their problems and hardly even

reported their aggressions to them. *"The words of one tradesman, "We never tell the police - it's no good," aptly express the state of mind of the residents of Gray's Inn road and neighbourhood."*[15]

This vision of the police force as "useless" or at least, not reliable, is the one used by Conan Doyle, but of course in a much exaggerated way. Indeed, Sherlock Holmes represents a free agent that comes to the rescue of the always-baffled policemen of Scotland Yard, including the well-known inspector Lestrade, an honest and willing man, but not really a match for Holmes's wit and talent for crime-solving.

This London of contrasts, mired in pea-soup fog and crippled with rampant criminality is the one Conan Doyle used as a setting for most of his Sherlock Holmes stories. Indeed, while most of the characters of his other works were evolving in a romanticized past, the detective dealt with the London of the Victorian Era. The detective is living in a world that speaks very deeply to Conan Doyle's Victorian readership, and that is probably one of the reasons people grew so attached to him, to the point of imagining he could be a real person; as Conan Doyle described them in their environment, the readers could effortlessly picture the tall detective and his friend, Dr Watson, prowling in the yellow, thick London fog, imagine them moving across the ill-famed streets of the East End, they could sense the tension around them as if they were walking by their side, for they knew exactly how it felt. Thus, *"the Sherlock Holmes mystery stories, […] represented the good, the bad, and the ugly of Victorian society: its ideals, its accomplishments, and its deepest fears."* [16]

We mentioned the "ugly" part of Victorian London: the changing times due to a new age of industrialization, the crimes, the poverty… Furthermore, Victorian people lived with the taunting feeling that the reassuring, familiar past was long gone, the present was tough and confusing, and the future so very uncertain. Indeed, changes occurring in the society were not only happening in the economic area. The Victorian era was also marked by new scientific discoveries and theories that completely disrupted people's deepest beliefs. In 1859, Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, challenging the Biblical belief in creationism and thus making havoc in people's approach of the world and of their very existence. Swift scientific progress gave birth to a vertiginous number of new, life-changing devices, such as the typewriter, the gramophone, the telephone, the telegraph, the electric light bulb, the internal combustion engine or the transatlantic cable. All novelties are suspect, and this profusion of new inventions

[15] Jerry White, London in the Nineteenth Century: "A Human Awful Wonder of God!" (London: Cape, 2007) p.342

[16] « Sherlock Holmes, Victorian Gentleman », Stanford University, [En Ligne] http://sherlockholmes.stanford.edu/history.html (page consultée le 12 juin 2014)

was worrying for a generation that had known the "old" world and was witnessing such a quick alteration in their daily lives.

Thus, Sherlock Holmes was *"the perfect hero for his age"*. [17] In this time of confusion, he represented a reassuring figure, bringing together an idealized past and a changing present. Holmes, being a perfect embodiment of the traditional English gentleman but putting his faith in technology, reason and science, was reconciling the people from the Victorian era with the idea that these new notions could be used to achieve extraordinary things.

C. Victorian Holmes: the Ideal English Gentleman

Throughout the short stories, the detective proves to be the quintessential English gentleman, with the quaint charm of something perceived by the Victorians as threatened by a new age. Indeed, being a "gentleman" was something highly valued in Victorian standards, and Sherlock Holmes' own attachment to this notion mirrors the moral assumptions of Victorian society. The importance of acting and living like a gentleman is something often stressed in Conan Doyle's stories, and Holmes character himself makes several comments about it. For example, in "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans," he seems to be utterly shocked by the murderer's actions, mostly because he finds them completely unacceptable, coming from an "English gentleman": *"How an English gentleman could behave in such a manner is beyond my comprehension"*[18] Conan Doyle worked hard to make sure his character would not be seen as anything but a respectable gentleman, and constructed his personality very carefully.

> *[…] However concocted, the ideal of the English gentleman was a very real one… It was one to compare with that of the noble Roman or of the chevalier sans peur et sans reproche. It was looked up to, admired and imitated all over the globe, that strange, indefinable yet quite clear notion of always and in all circumstances 'doing the decent thing'… It was an ideal embodied in the person of Mr Sherlock Holmes as if he had been created for this and no other purpose.*[19]

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[17] David S. Payne, Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia, Bloomington (Indiana), Gaslight Publications, 1992. p. 48

[18] Arthur Conan Doyle, *His Last Bow: A Reminiscence of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans " (New York: George H. Doran, 1917)

[19] Keating, H.R.F. *Sherlock Holmes: The Man And His World*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons., 1979), p. 11

This myth of the perfect English gentleman is something created, an ideal that was the reflection of a set of values and principles rather than a faithful representation of the average British man. Thus, Sherlock Holmes was, for the Victorian readership, *"just how they wanted a Victorian gentleman to be"*.[20] What makes Sherlock Holmes this gentlemanly figure, then?

The first thing that contributes to the creation of this portrait is the very fact that Sherlock Holmes lives in London. Indeed, living in the capital and knowing it so well makes him seem like the true, loyal English citizen, who knows his glorious city, the Queen's city, better than anyone else. This perfect knowledge of London is something that is regularly stressed in the stories, where Sherlock seems to have a map of the city engraved in his brain. In "The Adventure of the Red-Headed League", for example, Sherlock Holmes tells Watson that *"it is a hobby of [his] to have an exact knowledge of London."* [21]

Moreover, and it is a fact that tends to be overlooked when we think about Sherlock Holmes, who is rather seen by those who are only vaguely familiar with him as someone who is somewhat irreverent, Conan Doyle made a point to stress, on several occasions, the fact that Holmes is a patriotic man. The most striking example of this is the anecdote told by Watson about the time when Holmes proceeded to *"adorn the opposite wall with a patriotic V. R. done in bullet-pocks."*[22] These initials stand, of course, for "Victoria Regina", which is the Latin for "Queen Victoria", a mention that appeared on all Victorian coins. It is important to remember that Queen Victoria is still nowadays considered as England's most beloved sovereign. When Sherlock Holmes made his appearance into this world, the British Empire had never been so great, and despite the previously mentioned worries people could have, one thing remained stronger than ever: national pride and loyalty for their "Queen and Empress". A character who expressed his faithfulness towards the Royal family was, then, something really appealing to a Victorian readership. Holmes' patriotism is also highlighted in stories such as "His Last Bow", where he helps Britain defeat a network of German spies, consequently helping his country in the course of World War I.

In addition to being loyal to his Queen and country, Sherlock Holmes appears to be an educated man, despite his unusual approach to some intellectual matters. In the stories, Holmes

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[20] « Sherlock Holmes: the gentleman detective », Roger Pope, June 2006 [En ligne] http://www.scmp.com/article/552114/sherlock-holmes-gentleman-detective (page consultée le 11 mai 2014)

[21] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of The Red-Headed League", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

[22] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

mentions that he previously attended college for about two years[23], even though he did not actually obtain a degree. This is something that was really different then, compared to nowadays' reality. Getting a degree was not something as important as it is for our generation, except if you wanted to work as a physician or a doctor. A "gentleman" did not necessarily have to achieve a university course. It was considered good to attend college and nurture interest in various intellectual areas, but the actual degree was more or less optional for young people of "gentlemanly" status. According to their social class, they could either rely on a private income (family inheritance, financial provision…) to support themselves, or if they were not wealthy enough to pay for their lifestyle and needed to work, internships and letters of recommendation were something a lot more valued than a college degree. In one of the extremely rare discussions about his family background, Holmes explains to Watson that he descended from a family of *"country squires"*[24], so he was definitely raised in an educated environment, and was certainly urged by his "aristocratic" parents – having to socialize on a daily basis with other people of his age was certainly not something he was too keen on doing – to attend university classes. However, Holmes states that his *"line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows"*[25], probably meaning that he did not follow a regular, specific course of study but rather picked here and there the classes he wanted to attend, according to the subjects he was interested in.

The first description of Holmes's interest is given by Stamford, Watson's former fellow student in medical school, who is working at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and who is the one introducing the detective to Doctor Watson. Indeed, some years after he left college, Holmes is still sporadically conducting some scientific research at St. Bart' laboratory.

> *I believe he is well up in anatomy, and he is a first-class chemist; but, as far as I know, he has never taken out any systematic medical classes. His studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the-way knowledge which would astonish his professors.*[26]

[23] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the *Gloria Scott*", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

[24] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes,* "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

[25] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the *Gloria Scott*", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

[26] Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet", (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1888)

From the description Watson does of Holmes in the very first short story, "A Study in Scarlet", we get the impression that Holmes is a fairly narrow-minded man, with only a few interests, in very specific areas.

> *His ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge. Of contemporary literature, philosophy and politics he appeared to know next to nothing. […] My surprise reached a climax, however, when I found incidentally that he was ignorant of the Copernican Theory and of the composition of the Solar System. […] He said that he would acquire no knowledge which did not bear upon his object. Therefore all the knowledge which he possessed was such as would be useful to him. I enumerated in my own mind all the various points upon which he had shown me that he was exceptionally well informed.*[27]

This first impression of Dr. Watson's new flatmate is being challenged throughout the following short stories, in which Holmes proves to be a lot more resourceful and educated than what this first portrait promised. Weather Watson was wrong in his first analysis of Holmes' character or Holmes gained in knowledge and education as time passed is an interesting question, though it cannot be answered with certitude. We could argue that Watson's company led the very pragmatic Holmes to extend his initial interests to different areas, for example. But it is also possible that Conan Doyle decided, after this first and rather unsuccessful short story, to modify his character in some ways, to make him more of an educated man. It is often said that the early Holmes was a bit different from the one Conan Doyle depicted in his first commercial success in *The Strand*, "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891), and that his character became progressively less cold-blooded and marginal, even though he would always be this extraordinary and eccentric genius. *"Indeed, this early Holmes is too coldly and narrowly scientific, as Doyle appears to have sensed. He embodies the very qualities that, then as since, many find frightening in scientists as they are sometimes supposed to be – and sometimes actually are."*[28] Conan Doyle, thus, made Holmes a character that would be more reassuring for his Victorian readership, and more fitting to the image of the English gentleman he wanted him to embody.

Here and there in the stories, Conan Doyle gives hints of Holmes' education. On several occasions, he indicates that the detective is knowledgeable in Latin: for example, at the beginning of a short story, he is described as deciphering medieval palimpsests as a form of pastime[29], and

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[27] Ibid.

[28] David S. Payne, Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes: Sir Arthur Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia, (Bloomington, Indiana : Gaslight Publications, 1992)

29 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez" (London: George Newnes, 1905)

he happens to quote Latin authors such as Horace and Tacitus, in the original language. In the "The Adventure of the Red-Headed League", Holmes is talking with Watson, who tells him that his deductions appear to other people, as mysterious as magic tricks. To what Holmes cunningly responds with this quote from Tacitus' *Agricola*: *"Omne ignotum pro magnifico",* which means *"All things unknown seem grand."*

Latin is not the only language the detective can pride himself on mastering. He at least has some knowledge of German, as he is able to recognize the German word "rache" – revenge in English – when he sees it written in blood on a crime scene, which allows him to ridicule Scotland Yard – and more specifically poor Inspector Lestrade – once again: *"One other thing, Lestrade, […] `Rache,' is the German for `revenge;' so don't lose your time looking for Miss Rachel."* 30

We also know Holmes is nearly fluent in French thanks to a family legacy: he indeed explains to Watson that his grand-mother was *"the sister of Vernet, the French artist,"* [31] thus we can imagine that the young Holmes spent time in Europe, steeping himself into the language and culture of his French relatives. Moreover, he occasionally utters some words or sentences in French, as he does at the end of "The Adventure of the Red Headed League" when he says to Watson: *" 'L'homme c'est rien - l'oeuvre c'est tout,' as Gustave Flaubert wrote to George Sand*." And even though the actual quote is "*L'homme n'est rien, l'oeuvre tout!"* [32], this also shows an interest in literature, contrary to what Watson thought when he first established the detective's profile.

This taste for literature will be confirmed on a number of occasions, and Holmes will even prove to be rather well-read, as his discourse is full of references to literary works. For example, in "The Case of the Resident Patient", he refers to Edgar Allan Poe, commenting on the author's technique – which is certainly not a coincidence, but rather a little nod to the author Conan Doyle admired so much. Because Watson is astonished to see his friend being as impressive in his deductions as Poe's detective Monsieur Dupin, Holmes comments:

> *You remember that some time ago when I read to you that passage in one of Poe's sketches in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thoughts of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere 'tour de force' of the author.*[33]

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[30] Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet", (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1888)

[31] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Greek Interpreter", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

[32] Gustave Flaubert, George Sand, *Correspondance*, (Paris : Calmann-Lévy , 1904)

[33] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Case of the Resident Patient", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

We saw earlier that Holmes has at least some knowledge of German, but as he quotes and comments on Goethe's writings, we can imagine that he actually read them in their original language since he uses Goethe's native tongue to quote ***Faust*****:** *"Wir sind gewohnt dass die Menschen werhöhnen was sie nicht verstehen. Goethe is always pithy."*[34]

Moreover, as any good English gentleman should, Holmes proves to know his Shakespeare, and the famous playwright is most certainly the author to whom he refers the most, quoting a great number of his plays throughout the course of his adventures. For instance, in "The Adventure of the Empty House", Sherlock Holmes ironically addresses the Colonel Moran with a quote from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* [35] : *"Ah, Colonel!" said Holmes, arranging his rumpled collar. "'Journeys end in lovers' meetings,' as the old play says."* In this same short story, when Holmes shows to Watson the wax replica of himself he acquired to delude his enemies, he playfully references a verse from another of Shakespeare's plays, Antony *and Cleopatra* which originally quotes as*: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale / Her infinite variety." [36]* Holmes, who never misses an opportunity to be witty and is obviously very pleased with the little trick he just played on his opponents, amuses himself by diverting the original sentence: *"'I trust that age doth not wither nor custom stale my infinite variety,' said he."[37]*

Many other examples of Holmes's references to Shakespeare's work are to be found all through Conan Doyle's short stories, but the list of them would be too long to include in a paper such as this one. However, we cannot talk about this intertextuality without mentioning the most famous Shakespearian reference made by Holmes: *"Come, Watson, come. The game is afoot."*[38] This well-known sentence, which was reiterated in most Sherlock Holmes adaptations, is in fact actually from Shakespeare's play *Henry V,* and is uttered by the King himself*: "The game's afoot / Follow your spirit, and upon this charge / Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!"[39]*

Many other references to writers and literary works are to be found, sprinkled in Holmes' discourse, and it appears clearly that Conan Doyle wanted to make up for the unfortunate review

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[34] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, (London: Spencer Blackett, 1890)
[35] William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, Act II, Scene III

[36] William Shakespeare, *Antony And Cleopatra*, Act II, scene II, 232–237
[37] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Empty House" (London: George Newnes, 1905)

[38] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" (London: George Newnes, 1905)

[39] William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act III, scene I.

of his detective's literary culture made by Watson in his very first short story. It was, indeed, primordial for him that his gentleman character would prove to have the education that is suited to any respectable man.

To add to this portrait of the refined gentleman, Conan Doyle gave to his character a strong taste for music. A good musical culture as well as playing a musical instrument was, indeed, a mark of education and sophistication. The detective, thus, gives himself to the practice of violin, and is a rather good player, as stated by Watson*: "My friend was an enthusiastic musician, being himself not only a very capable performer, but a composer of no ordinary merit."*[40] His love of music goes sometimes rather far, to the point where he will devote himself to rather obscure but highly intellectual musical activities, such as described by Watson in "The Bruce-Partington Plans" where he says that *"Holmes lost himself in a monograph which he had undertaken upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus."*[41]

But a gentleman is not only an educated man, with a more or less aristocratic background. The typical gentleman also has a set of values, such as courtesy and nobility of heart. As far as courtesy is concerned, Holmes can sometimes be a little rude and ignorant of social conventions, but it is however mentioned on several occasions that he is capable of being really courteous, especially when dealing with ladies. While this insistence about the detective's manners towards women could be seen as a sign of condescendence and misogyny, it first and foremost reflects the mentality of an era, and is more likely meant to emphasize the fact that Holmes had all the qualities of the stereotypical gentleman. For instance, in "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" Watson reports that their landlady, Mrs Hudson, cannot help but be fond of him despite his troublesome manners as a renter, because of his *"remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women."*[42]

Besides, Holmes also occasionally shows sentiment, despite his reputation of cold-bloodedness. The detective, in Conan Doyle's first short stories, was a much colder and detached character than the one he progressively became, as the author developed his personality. Holmes, in the early period, seems to enjoy solving mysteries for the sole intellectual challenge it represents. If this is something that will always be an underlying purpose for his crime solving,

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[40] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of The Red-Headed League", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

[41] Arthur Conan Doyle, *His Last Bow: A Reminiscence of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans " (New York: George H. Doran, 1917)

[42] Arthur Conan Doyle, *His Last Bow: A Reminiscence of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Dying detective" (New York: George H. Doran, 1917)

another motive will increasingly appear: the pursuit of "justice".[43] Indeed, if Holmes always remains a rather cold and emotionless person, as described at many occasions by Watson, he seems to be inclined to use his expertise and intellect for the greater good. We already mentioned the fact that he makes a point to serve his country, but his sense of justice does not only apply to the defense of his nation. As he is not a police detective but a consultant one, his obligations towards the law are not as strict as they would be if he was a state officer. This means that sometimes, he can rely on his own judgment to decide on the outcome of his investigation. When facing a situation when he has to judge whether or not the "criminal" really deserves to be punished, Holmes is not as emotionless as we could think at first sight. He might seem insensitive, but the way he deals with certain circumstances proves that he is actually capable of empathy, as we can see with the following declaration: *"Once or twice in my career I have done more real harm by my discovery of the criminal than ever he had done by his crime. I have learned caution now, and I had rather play tricks with the law of England than with my own conscience."*[44]

An example of this particular sense of justice would be his attitude towards the character of James Ryder at the very end of "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle". After finding out that Ryder is guilty of both a theft and the framing of an innocent man, he decides to let him go as the man proves to be only just a poor scared fellow who did a mistake once, but will most certainly show redemption if given a chance. Deciding that not only the victim of the framing is out of danger, but the mercy he will show to the wrongdoer is likely to encourage him in a better direction, Holmes executes his own justice.

> *After all, Watson," said Holmes, reaching up his hand for his clay pipe, "I am not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies. If Horner were in danger it would be another thing; but this fellow will not appear against him, and the case must collapse. I suppose that I am commuting a felony. But it is just possible that I am saving a soul. This fellow will not go wrong again; he is too terribly frightened. Send him to jail now, and you make him a jail-bird for life.*[45]

This sense of mercy is something that can be seen several times from Sherlock Holmes, for instance when he also lets go of John Turner in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery". Indeed, Holmes learns that the victim was guilty of blackmailing Turner, and understands that the man's

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[43] David S. Payne, Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia, Bloomington (Indiana), Gaslight Publications, 1992. p.52

[44] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" (London: George Newnes, 1905)

[45] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of The Blue Carbuncle", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

crime was meant to protect his daughter's freedom. After he makes sure that no innocent man will be convinced with murder, Sherlock Holmes allows Turner to keep his secret, knowing that revealing his crime would ruin both the man's reputation and the relationship between two lovers: the son of the victim, and the daughter of the murderer.[46]

In both of these above examples, Holmes acts according to his feelings and his very own sense of justice. It could be seen as a weakness, or as a trespass against moral, but by allowing his character to be merciful, Conan Doyle actually makes him more human, more sympathetic, and thus more likeable by his readership.

All the elements previously mentioned participated in the construction of an image of Holmes that allowed the Victorian readership to see in him a respectable character, someone they could look up to. He was really a character of his time, because despite his eccentricity, most of his activities and references reflected those of a gentleman, according to Victorian standards.

This image of an ideal gentleman, true to his country and principles, is certainly one of the elements responsible for Holmes' incredible appeal on the Victorian readership. However, it would not have been sufficient if Holmes was not also the genius mind that we know he is.

Indeed, Conan Doyle never ceased to emphasize how brilliant Holmes is, detailing his mastering of deduction method, technology, and insisting on his absolute trust in science. In "A Scandal in Bohemia", Watson describes him as *"the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen."* [47] Holmes' faith in rationalism gives him a touch of modernity, and his taste for science and technology is reminiscent of Queen Victoria's husband, the well-respected Prince Albert. Indeed, very much like Albert did with the Great Exhibition of 1851, whose purpose was to demonstrate how society was being changed for the better by science and technology, Sherlock Holmes' character showed he could bring hope in this world thanks to his intellect and scientific knowledge.

The readers are always reminded of Holmes' cleverness, and this is where the role of Doctor Watson shall not be overlooked. Indeed, Watson, too, is presented as a perfect gentleman. He is a strong character with high moral values, educated and well-read. Besides, his experience as a former army doctor makes him both physically brave and in possession of an extensive medical knowledge. He is often considered as only just a foil for Holmes' incredible character, but actually, it is because Watson is himself such a respectable and smart character that his admiration

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[46] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

[47] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "A Scandal in Bohemia", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

of Holmes's intellectual faculties is meaningful to the readers. However, Watson is, indeed, a much more ordinary man, he is clever, but in a common way. Conan Doyle, in his autobiography, describes him as Holmes' *"commonplace comrade […] an educated man of action who could both join in the exploits and narrate them."*[48] Because Watson is the everyman figure the reader can identify to, his admiration can easily become the readers' one.

This balanced combination of a perfect gentleman, displaying all the familiar qualities valued by Victorian morals, and of an extraordinarily brilliant, almost mechanical mind, is exactly what allowed Sherlock Holmes to become the key figure of the Victorian era he turned out to be. Science and technology, seen through the prism of a man like Sherlock Holmes, was not so scary after all. Indeed, *"what was to be feared in a science so gracefully mastered, so domesticated, and so entirely in the service of a servant of justice, a sentinel of right order, and a companionable man?"*[49]

Some initial answers to our reflection upon Holmes' success are already starting to appear, as we approach the end of this first section. As we saw earlier, Sherlock Holmes was not the first popular detective in the Victorian literary landscape, and he was actually very much inspired by the numerous detective figures that preceded him. But if these detectives enjoyed a rather good response, Holmes' success, though, was way more impressive than Poe's M. Dupin or Dicken's Inspector Buckett.

Moreover, Conan Doyle's stories accomplished the remarkable feat of attracting all layers of the population, both the *"uncritical and sensation-loving populaces"* but also those *"inclined to Poe"*, [50] the more educated, demanding ones. Never in the history of detective stories, had people of such different social classes gathered with the same enthusiasm around a character of fiction. We noted the importance of the context of the short stories creation, we saw that people were scared by modernity, and indeed this fear was not something relevant to class nor wealth. This fear was insidious and this fear came from the unknown powers of technology and modernity. *"Modernity was creating fears [….] generating needs that made men equals."*[51].

What people needed was representation, but also hope and comfort. Conan Doyle gave them all of this, by creating a character evolving in a time and place so familiar to his readership.

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[48] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London: John Murray, 1930), chapter VIII

[49] David S. Payne, Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia, Bloomington (Indiana), Gaslight Publications, 1992. p.53

[50] David S. Payne, Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia, Bloomington (Indiana), Gaslight Publications, 1992. p.6

[51] Ibid, p.11

He described in his stories the London they knew so well, with an authenticity only made possible by his familiarity with the city. He addressed the readers' need for sensational, for scandal and murders, but also gave them something to cling on, a glimpse of hope in a tormented era. He created a character who was both the proud holder of British essential and traditional values, but was also representative of the deep changes that were occurring in society. Sherlock Holmes, the gentleman and the brilliant prodigy, represented the hope that modernity could be embraced without losing the values that were so dear to Victorians.

The contextual factor seems, thus, to have been essential to the immediate and growing success of Sherlock Holmes stories, but then, how come this success never faded, as time passed and context changed?

II. The Detective's Evolution through Time and Space: the Construction of the "Holmesian Myth"

Sherlock Holmes and the whole "mythology" surrounding his character has invaded our collective imaginary, and even our language. His name has become a byword for the very concept of detective, quotations from the stories have been absorbed in our daily conversations without us even realizing it. When asked about Sherlock Holmes, most people will have, at least, a remote idea of who the character is. Everybody has a mental representation of the character that has been crafted with time, but it is interesting to see that this image is actually rather far from the one originally created by Arthur Conan Doyle. Most of the things people generally believe to be from the original stories are, in fact, elements that have been added later on through famous illustrations and successful adaptations.

A. The illustrated Sherlock Holmes

Throughout the stories, Conan Doyle gives hints to his readers about Holmes' physical appearance. However, it is not so much those elements of description than the illustration work of Sidney Paget that forged the general idea people have about what Holmes looks like. Sidney Paget, indeed, was the man who illustrated all the Sherlock Holmes short stories published in *The Strand,* creating up to 356 original sketches. However, it is interesting to know that, contrary to the most widespread idea, Paget was not the first person to try and give a face to the famous detective. The first publication of "A Study in Scarlet"*,* in the 1887 issue of *Beeton's Christmas Annual* was supplemented by four illustrations by an illustrator rather well-known at the time, David Henry Friston. *(See Annexes 1, 2 and 3.)* However, those illustrations were quite dull and, most of all, pictured a Sherlock Holmes that was very far from the way Doyle described his character. The author very most likely based his detective on the physical aspect of the teacher who inspired him to write Holmes, Joseph Bell, whom he described in his autobiography as being *"thin, wiry, dark, with a high-nosed acute face, penetrating grey eyes, angular shoulders, and a jerky way of walking."*[52] This depiction matches in many ways the elements of physical description given by Watson about 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 excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those intervals of*

[52] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London: John Murray, 1930), chapter III

> *torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of determination.*[53]

Moreover, Holmes' elegance and physical refinement – at least when he is out of his apartment – is something that is often stressed in the stories, and are part of his character as a gentleman. When observing Friston's portrayal of Holmes, we can understand why his illustrations were never famous nor recognized as the proper representation of the detective. Indeed, Friston's Holmes looks nothing sharp nor elegant, nor anything like in the stories, really, and many reviews were really harsh about his work. In *The Bedside, Bathtub, and Armchair Companion to Sherlock Holmes,* for example, the authors seem appalled by the lack of faithfulness to Conan Doyle's description displayed in these drawings:

> *His head and hands appear small, almost feminine, his sideburns are ridiculously long, and his figure is plump, dwarfed by the oversize coat. On his head appears a strange, rounded hat. This Holmes looks nothing like the detective we know.*[54]

Needless to say Friston was never to illustrate a Holmes' story again, but he was not the only one to unsuccessfully try and capture the detective's image. No one less than Arthur Conan Doyle's father himself undertook the task, but his work never had the impact of Paget's drawings either. Indeed, Charles Altamont Doyle illustrated the first book publication of "A Study in Scarlet", in 1888. However, whether or not he actually cared about rendering an accurate representation of the detective as depicted by his son is questionable: by giving it a close look, we can distinctively see how Doyle's father actually gave Holmes his own features, with his distinctive and rather messy beard *(See Annexes 4 and 5)*. This last detail, for example, is in total contradiction with Holmes personality, who, even when he is investigating in the moor in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, makes sure, *"[…] with that catlike love of personal cleanliness which was one of his characteristics, that his chin should be as smooth and his linen as perfect as if he were in Baker Street."*[55]

It was not before 1891 and the first illustrations by Sidney Paget, for *The Strand* magazine, that Sherlock Holmes found a physical identity that would stick to him for generations to come. To create the detective's image, Paget clearly used the elements of description given by Conan

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[53] Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet", (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1888)

[54] Dick Riley, Pam McAllister, The Bedside, Bathtub, and Armchair Companion to Sherlock Holmes, (Bloomsbury Academic, 1998)

[55] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (London: George Newnes, 1902)

Doyle, but there are many assumptions about the real person who also served as an inspiration to Paget. It is often said that Paget's brother, Walter, who looked very much like the Holmes described by Conan Doyle, was the model for his depiction of the detective. If this idea was denied by another of his brothers, Henry Marriott Paget, it is however impossible not to notice the acute resemblance between the two *(See Annexes 6 and 7)*. Paget's illustrations distinguished themselves from the others thanks to their liveliness and realism but mostly thanks to the very recognizable features he gave to both Holmes and Watson. Indeed, while Friston's and Charles Doyle's Holmes and Watson had very common traits, without any distinctive details, Paget had the great idea to give them recurrent accessories that will become emblematic of the characters. Watson is rather easily identifiable, albeit to a lesser extent than his detective friend of course, with his bowler hat, his cane and his thick moustache *(See Annexe 8)*. But the real stroke of genius was Paget's choice for Sherlock Holmes' peculiar outfit. If the illustrator was careful to draw Holmes as an elegant man, often dressed in well-fitted suits and wearing a shiny top-hat *(See Annex 9)*, as it was fashionable at the time, he also addressed the detective's eccentric tastes by giving him a very special outfit for his investigations in the countryside. Indeed, during his trips to more rural areas, Conan Doyle described Holmes as wearing a *"long grey travelling-cloak and close-fitting cloth cap"*[56], a *"ear-flapped travelling cap"*[57] or a *"tweed suit and cloth cap"*[58] but never does he actually mention the deerstalker cap and the Inverness cape in which Paget drew the detective, and that will become the everlasting tokens of Sherlock Holmes' character *(See Annexe 10)*. A rather amusing fact, there is actually a well-known picture of Joseph Bell, that we mentioned earlier, wearing both the deerstalker and the travelling cape *(See Annex 11)*. Surprisingly enough, considering the incredible impact of these illustrations, Conan Doyle was, at first, not entirely satisfied with Paget's Holmes, judging that he was more handsome than what he imagined. In his autobiography, he gives his impressions on the matter:

> *[Sherlock Holmes] had, as I imagined him, a thin razor-like face, with a great hawks-bill of a nose, and two small eyes, set close together on either side of it. Such was my conception. It chanced, however, that poor Sidney Paget who, before his premature death, drew all the original pictures, had a younger brother whose name, I think, was Walter, who served him as a model. The handsome Walter took the place of the more powerful but uglier Sherlock, and perhaps from the point of view of my lady readers it was as well.*[59]

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[56] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Boscombe Valley Mystery", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

[57] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, "Silver Blaze", (London: George Newnes, 1894)

[58] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* (London: George Newnes, 1902)

[59] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London: John Murray, 1930), chapter XI

However, despite this first reluctance, Conan Doyle might eventually have grown attached to Sidney Paget's work. Indeed, when he went back to creating new Sherlock Holmes stories and wrote "The Hound of the Baskervilles", nine years after throwing his detective from the top of the Reichenbach Falls, he specifically asked that Paget should illustrate the story. Conan Doyle probably understood that, from then on, his character would be permanently linked to Paget's visuals. The deerstalker and Inverness cape became part of the whole "canon", and even turned into the archetypal attire of the stereotypical sleuth. The durable and worldwide impact made by Paget on the detective's visual identity is not only caused by the fact that he illustrated most of Holmes' stories, but also by the fact that his illustrations were so powerful and popular that they were used for the foreign editions of Conan Doyle's work. For example, when the American edition of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was published by *Harper & Brothers* in 1892*,* the stories were supplemented by Paget's illustrations. The Spanish (*Mundial*, 1902) and the Czech (*Vilímek*, 1906) editions of the detective's adventures also chose to feature Sidney Paget's artworks.[60]

What Paget managed to do was to give life to the characters: his drawings are full of details from the stories, but also from Victorian everyday life, allowing Victorian readership to identify with the characters. The very choice of the deerstalker cap and Inverness cape, as well as Watson's bowler hat, emphasized the "Britishness" of the two men, and contributed in making them into British icons.

Paget undoubtedly had the biggest impact on people's visual representation of Holmes, but another illustrator gave Holmes some of his most recognizable features. Frederic Dorr Steele, indeed, was the artist who drew the illustrations for the short stories written from 1903 and published in the American journal *Collier's Magazine*. His depiction of Holmes was very powerful and modern-looking, as he was amongst the very first ones to create color covers for the great detective's adventures *(See Annex 12)*. Moreover, by the time Steele started drawing Holmes, a very famous comedian, William Gillette, had taken the role of the famous sleuth on stage, and the artist admitted that his detective was very much inspired by Gillette's physical appearance. Thus, in his illustrations, Frederic Dorr Steel took up Paget's famous elements, the deerstalker and cape, but also draw for the first time an element that was going to become part of the general belief about Holmes' appearance: the calabash pipe, introduced for the first time by Gillette. Indeed, Sherlock Holmes is often described as smoking the pipe, and Paget often represented him doing it *(See Annex 13)*, but never in the original stories did the detective use the calabash pipe that yet became an unavoidable element of Holmes' visual identity.

[60] Natacha Levet, *Sherlock Holmes: De Baker Street au grand écran* (Flammarion, 2012), section 3.

The illustrators, thus, had a huge impact on the way Holmes was going to be perceived by his public, and if Conan Doyle gave them the basic components to do so, it was really their artistic choices that gave a face and a visual identity to the famous detective.

B. The adapted Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes' literary success was to give birth to many adaptations. The famous detective, whose reputation transcended borders, is indeed known to be one of the most adapted characters of fiction, whether on stage, on television, on the big screen, on the radio, but also on all the other media such as comic books and video games. *"More films have been made about Sherlock Holmes than about any other character in the literature of the whole world"*[61] This appropriation of the character by art and pop-culture is really what has made Sherlock Holmes into what we can call a myth. Natacha Levet, *in Sherlock Holmes: De Baker Street au grand écran*, explains how this mythical dimension is constructed:

> *Holmes' adventures soon became a myth, a fiction that was repeated, taken over and memorized, and that eventually became an integral part of the European and American cultural heritage, to finally become a worldwide phenomenon. […] As a literary figure, Sherlock Holmes was nourished by prior writings and became, almost as soon as he appeared, a mythic figure shaped by its representations in literature, illustrations, theater and later on screen and television. Therefore, the Holmesian myth is not something created solely by Arthur Conan Doyle's story-telling, it is the sum of all its variations in all kinds of media.*[62]

To understand how the representation of Holmes that still survives in people's mind nowadays has progressively been created, it is essential to analyze the most successful adaptations of Conan Doyle's work. As we cannot possibly address everything that was done in a paper such as this one, the emphasis will be placed on only three of the most popular incarnations of Sherlock Holmes: William Gillette, Basil Rathbone and Jeremy Brett. Those three actors clearly stand out as the most remembered portrayals of the famous detective, each one of them representing a different era in the long tradition of Holmes' adaptations, and participating in the representation of Holmes that still subsists in this day and age.

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[61] Philip Weller, Christophen Roden, *Life & Times of Sherlock Holmes* (Grammercy, 1992), p.16

[62] Personal translation from Natacha Levet's introduction to *Sherlock Holmes: De Baker Street au grand écran* (Flammarion, 2012)

B.a. William Gillette (1853-1937)

William Gillette, in addition to being one of the very first men to play the detective, is undoubtedly the one who brought the most to the canonical image of Holmes. The comedian played the part of the famous detective in over a thousand performances between 1899 and 1935, and was unanimously praised for his interpretation of the Victorian hero. Interestingly enough, the actor was American but his passionate involvement in the part and his perfect mastering of the British accent helped the audience forget about this detail.

In 1899, William Gillette wrote a play inspired by *A Study in Scarlet*, "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Final Problem", soberly entitled *Sherlock Holmes* and went meeting Conan Doyle in England in order to obtain his approval. In his autobiography, Conan Doyle talks about the play and says *"It was written and most wonderfully acted by William Gillette, the famous American. […] I was charmed both with the play and the acting."*[63]

Passionate about the character and very inspired by Paget's aesthetic of the character, Gillette took over some already famous attributes such as the deerstalker and tweed cape, and popularized some others, some mentioned in the stories, and some others coming of his own imagination. It is indeed to Gillette's portrayal of the detective that we own the representation of Holmes in elegant dressing gowns. The gowns are mentioned in the stories, and Paget occasionally drew the detective wearing one, but it was really Gillette that made this detail visible and characteristic of Holmes *(See Annex 14)*. Moreover, he was the one who associated the calabash pipe to Holmes' character. Indeed, this kind of pipe is nowhere to be found in the original stories, and was in fact a prop chosen by Gillette for mere technical reasons. Indeed:

> *He had to use a curved pipe rather than a more authentic straight pipe because it was easier to speak with it. A curved pipe […] is easier to "speak around" without removing it from the mouth. […] A straight pipe will tend to bounce around somewhat uncontrollably while speaking.*[64]

Gillette's performance on stage was not solely responsible for his assimilation with Holmes' visual identity. As we saw earlier, Frederic Dorr Steele contributed to popularizing Gillette's image as Sherlock Holmes by using him as a model for his drawings of the detective, and

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[63] Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, (London: John Murray, 1930), chapter XI

[64] "Featured Pipe Smoker: William Gillette", AlanDP, Saturday, January 10, 2009 [En ligne] http://briarfiles.blogspot.fr/2009/01/featured-pipe-smoker-william-gillette.html (Page consultée le 15 mai 2014)

many publishers used Gillette's Holmes as illustrations for Conan Doyle's short stories *(See Annex 15).* Gillette played Sherlock Holmes on stage for more than thirty years, but also featured in a silent movie in 1916, seventeen years after his first appearance on stage as the famous detective. The movie, unfortunately, cannot be found today, but a reviewer stated that *"William Gillette as Sherlock Holmes, in moving pictures, even at the ripe age of sixty-three years, was a consummation devoutly to be wished."*[65]

William Gillette also voiced Sherlock Holmes for the radio in November 1935, in an adaptation of his famous play by Edith Meiser for Lux Radio Theater. Orson Welles, who also adapted the play for the radio in 1938, a year after Gillette's passing, introduced the drama by paying a tribute to the great comedian:

> *As everybody knows, [William Gillette] produced the play which is as much a part of the Holmes literature as any of Sir Arthur's own romances. And, as nobody will ever forget, he gave his face to him. […] It is too little to say that William Gillette resembled Sherlock Holmes; Sherlock Holmes looks exactly like William Gillette. Sounds like him, too, we're afraid.*[66]

Orson Welles was quite right about Gillette's play being fully part of the Holmesian canon. Indeed, it is from this very play that the overly famous *"Elementary, my dear Watson"* came. This sentence was never actually uttered by the detective in the original stories, yet it is the first – and often the only one – quote people know and think about when the name "Sherlock Holmes" is mentioned.

It has often been stated by the critics that Gillette's play took a lot of liberties from the original stories. However, in regard to the massive role his interpretation played in the construction of the popular image of the detective, it would be an inaccuracy to say that he was not "the real" Sherlock Holmes.

B.b. Basil Rathbone (1892-1967)

Basil Rathbone was one of the most popular actors to embody the famous detective, and in a way his appearance in the 1939 movie took over from Gillette's Holmes. Two years after the passing of the man who gave one of the most emblematic portrayals of the detective, another key figure of the Holmesian myth was rising. Alongside with Nigel Bruce as John Watson, Basil

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[65] Roger Johnson and Jean Upton, *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* (The History Press, 2012), p.70

[66] Orson Welles, script radio of *Sherlock Holmes* for the Mercury Theatre, September 25, 1938. http://www.genericradio.com/show.php?id=8VCGXSKAOS [En ligne]

Rathbone played the famous detective in a series of fourteen films based on Conan Doyle' short stories, released between 1939 and 1946. In the first two movies, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, both released in 1939 and produced by *20th Century Fox*, Rathbone played a proper Victorian Holmes, consistent with Gillette's interpretation and faithful to the original stories, in terms of settings. The following twelve movies, however, produced by *Universal Studios*, did not benefit from the same treatment and were mere B pictures, with lower budget and most of all, were set in contemporary England, and featured Holmes and Watson in the WWII timeline, investigating Nazis. Basil Rathbone was unanimously recognized as an outstanding actor, and he is still nowadays considered by some people as *"the perfect Sherlock Holmes, […] entirely convincing as thinker, dreamer and man of action."*[67] Nigel Bruce, for his part, was the first actor to really make an impression with the character of John Watson, and the way he played the part would inspire many of the following interpretations of the good Doctor. Indeed, he is responsible for the "erroneous" general image of Watson as a sympathetic, but older and quite simple-minded companion for Holmes. Bruce's Watson is not the talented and smart man writing the thrilling adventures he has with the detective, but rather a loyal and impressionable friend, a real foil for Holmes' extraordinary genius. If the way Bruce played Watson is questionable, what is certain is that it was Rathbone and Nigel's pairing that really set the example for the incredible strength of Holmes and Watson's friendship. Their powerful duo and the beautiful productions made by the *20th Century Fox* contributed to keep Conan Doyle's stories alive, and "The Hound of the Baskervilles" undeniably became one of Holmes' most popular adventures thanks to their contribution.

Interestingly enough, it was with Rathbone's interpretation that the magnifying glass appeared as a characteristic accessory of the detective. The prop is mentioned in the original stories as one of the devices occasionally used by Holmes, but there is no memorable representation of Holmes using it before Rathbone took over the role. Since then, the magnifying glass became another key element of Holmes' visual identity *(See Annex 16)*.

Basil Rathbone is also one of the reasons we still picture Holmes wearing the deerstalker and inverness cape. Indeed, Rathbone wears it almost all the time, at least in the first two movies set in the Victorian era. The matter is that he wears it even when the original Sherlock Holmes, with his acute sense of fashion, would not. Indeed, this was an outfit strictly reserved for cases in the countryside, and by no means something he would wear in the city.

[67] Roger Johnson and Jean Upton, *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* (The History Press, 2012), p.73

As mentioned earlier, the Rathbone movies were the first to set Holmes and Watson outside the Victorian era. Even if the movies were not really high quality as far as the story-line is concerned, this was, once again, revealing of the fact that, in times of crisis, people need a character such as Holmes. Indeed, modernizing him and setting him in contemporary England, fighting the greatest threat of the time, the Nazis, allowed the audience to once again identify with the stories, and find some form of comfort in them. In such a troubled time, Holmes appeared as the implacable hero who was once again fighting for his country. He was a bringer of hope and a reassessment that values dear to the British nation, such as courage, patriotism, combined with reason and science, could defeat even the worst enemies.

> *Given the massive popularity of Rathbone's Holmes at the time, it was inevitable to induct him into the fight against Nazism, […] to promote the sale of war bonds and in support of the British War Relief. […] His quintessential 'British-ness' must have helped a great deal at a time when Franklin D. Roosevelt was trying to win American popular opinion in going to war and supporting Europe.*[68]

On a side note, as Basil Rathbone became one of the most acclaimed Holmes, it is amusing to see that one "less serious" adaptation or rather pastiche, paid a tribute to the actor. Indeed, the children's book *Basil of Baker Street*, by Eve Titus published in 1958 told the story of a mouse detective living with his personal biographer Doctor David Q. Dawson under the actual detective Sherlock Holmes' apartment at 221B Baker Street. Obviously, the name "Basil" given to this little detective, who is also wearing miniature deerstalker and Inverness cape, was not a coincidence, and was obviously an homage to the great actor. The animation movies made by Disney in 1986, *The Great Mouse Detective*, adapted from Titus's book, reinforced the tribute to both Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Indeed, it clearly made Basil's companion looking like Bruce's Watson *(See Annexes 17 and 18)*, and they sampled Rathbone's voice from a 1966 reading of "The Adventure of the Red-Headed League" to dub the actual, human, Sherlock Holmes who is appearing in the movie.

More than seventy years after he first played the detective, Basil Rathbone is still considered by many as the "ultimate Sherlock Holmes", and his duo with Nigel Bruce is still viewed as one of the best representation of Holmes and Watson's friendship.

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[68] Jessica Levine, "Basil Rathbone: The Reluctant Sherlock Holmes", 6 February 2014 [En Ligne] http://www.ihearofsherlock.com/2014/06/basil-rathbone-reluctant-sherlock-holmes.html#.VAikIPmSzJh (Page consultée le 15 mai 2014)

B.c. Jeremy Brett (1933-1995)

Gillette was the ultimate Holmes on stage, Rathbone on screen and Brett was definitely – at least until recently – Holmes on television.

Many attempts at adapting the adventures of the detective and his friend were made on television, but it was not until 1984 and the fantastic version of the *Granada Television* that a proper successor for Rathbone's Holmes appeared. Indeed, *The Granada* launched itself into the grand project of faithfully adapting all the Sherlock Holmes stories written by Conan Doyle, an ambitious mission that no one attempted before. Of the fifty-six short stories, forty were adapted, resulting in thirty-six episodes and four films, in six series from 1984 to 1994. Sadly, Jeremy Brett was unable to complete the whole adventures, as he died at a very early age of a heart failure.

At first, Brett was not that keen about taking the role. He felt the character was dated, and that great actors already did everything that was to be done about the character. He did not see the interest of doing yet another Sherlock Holmes. He felt that this character was a *cliché* that was not worth portraying again. As he said to his son, David, after he was offered the part: *"I really don't want to do it. I think it's been done. I think it's been done so many times I just think it's an old chestnut. I don't know – I can't see any point in trying to do it anymore."*[69]
But after he read the whole collection of Conan Doyle's short stories, and realized the character's deepness, he became passionate about him and agreed to take the part. However when he read the script, he was very disappointed, as the adapters *"had gone so far away"* and his response was that he was hired to *"do Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes . . . these aren't Sherlock Holmes – Doyle's stories"*[70] Therefore, he fought on a daily basis for his detective to be the one he read about in Conan Doyle's stories, and he also reconstructed the image of the detective as described by Conan Doyle and illustrated by Sidney Paget. (*See Annexes 19, 20, 21*)

Thus, it is thanks to him that the *Granada* Holmes was so much like Doyle's. Indeed, Jeremy Brett's interpretation of Holmes broke with Gillette's and Rathbone's, and returned to a more authentic, more faithful representation of the detective, as pictured in the Conan Doyle's stories. When Gillette and Rathbone, although very good and dedicated to the part, only portrayed a rather "mono-dimensional" detective, Brett added complexity to the role and played a multi-faceted character. Indeed, Gillette and Rathbone's Holmes focused on the gentlemanly side of

[69] Jeremy Brett's interview by Liane Hensen, National Public Radio, November 1991 http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4197258 [En Ligne]

[70] ibid.

Holmes, but they seem to have forgotten that Watson also described his friend as having a *"bohemian soul"*[71], and a tendency to slide into a kind of manic depression, especially when he did not have a case to solve. For example, in their adaptations, Gillette and Rathbone never mentioned Holmes' use of cocaine, although it is something Conan Doyle stressed, to emphasize Holmes' need for intellectual stimulation. Indeed, the detective is pictured as having troubles dealing with the monotony of everyday life, and when he does not have a case to stimulate his brilliant intellect, he needs something to adjust to a more ordinary and quiet lifestyle. Drugs such as tobacco and cocaine are his way of dealing with the boredom and depression that normal life inspires him. Even though this is an element that fades away in the stories, as Holmes found a friend to help him overcome his *ennui* – and who, as a medical man, disapproved of his drug abuse – this is still an important part of the character. Holmes is not a drug addict, as often misinterpreted, his real addiction is solving crime and cocaine is only just a mere substitute, as he explains to Watson:

> *My mind rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere, I can dispense then with artificial stimulants*[72]

Jeremy Brett understood the detective's complex personality better than any other of his predecessors, and portrays a detective who is rigid, asocial, enigmatic, cold-blooded, and methodic as well as brilliant and elegant, but also moody, lively, emphatic and full of humor. In his performance, Brett managed to merge perfectly the eccentric and messy Holmes with the Victorian gentleman people generally have in mind when thinking about the detective. He made him more human and flawed, and by doing so made him more loveable, more accessible to the viewers, just as the original Holmes was a character people could relate to, in spite of his brilliant intellect.

Moreover, Jeremy Brett added humor to a character often portrayed as dead-serious. On this matter, Nancy Beiman, member of "The Sherlock Holmes Society of London", stated: *"I think that Sherlock Holmes badly needed this sort of treatment. Conan Doyle never intended Holmes to be taken as seriously as some Sherlockians take him. I see many comic elements in the stories. […]"*[73] And indeed, Conan Doyle's Holmes has a rather fine sense of humor, and never misses a

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[71] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "A Scandal in Bohemia", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

[72] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Sign of Four*, (London: Spencer Blackett, 1890)

[73] Carlen Lavigne, *Remake Television: Reboot, Re-use, Recycle* (Lexington Books, 2014)

chance to sneak in a clever play on word or a sardonic remark, and as he himself admits in "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone": *"My old friend here will tell you that I have an impish habit of practical joking."*[74]

But Holmes would be nothing without his Watson and the treatment of the two men's friendship, as well as Watson's very character, is another of the *Granada* Holmes' strength. The show had two different actors playing Watson's part, as the first one, David Burke, had to leave for personal reasons. He and Edward Hardwicke, who succeeded him, both gave the best interpretation of Watson so far. Indeed, as we saw earlier, the doctor's part was often caricaturized, reduced to a mere foil for the detective. If the audience could have sympathy, affection for this bumbling old-fashion doctor, they could not really admire him nor relate to him, as Conan Doyle's readers would with the original Watson. Yet, we saw that Watson's cleverness and strength of character was essential to the success of the Sherlock Holmes' stories, as a reliable and admirable narrator. The *Granada* Watson is active, sensible, subtle and clever, and a perfect match for Brett's Holmes. Their duo is even more powerful than Rathbone and Bruce's, as they really complement each other and have a friendship based on mutual respect rather than a relationship where Watson is only just a loyal "watchdog".

Jeremy Brett's interpretation renewed people's interest for a character who seemed a bit old-fashioned at the time he took over. Thanks to *Granada* Holmes, people started reading the original stories again, as they realized Sherlock Holmes was so much more than a caricatured detective wearing a deerstalker and carrying a big magnifying glass.

B.d. Sherlock Holmes around the world

Adaptations of the famous detective are to be found everywhere. Not only in Europe or in Western countries, but really worldwide. In this section, we will consider the scope of Holmes' success by briefly seeing the most famous adaptations made outside of England and America. Conan Doyle's short stories were indeed translated into more than eighty languages, indeed,

> *In addition to French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Finnish, Russian, Czechoslovakian, Latin, Hebrew, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Greek, Egyptian, Hindi, Sinhalese, Urdu and sixty more spoken languages, stories have also been published in non-spoken languages such as Braille, Pitman shorthand, Morse code, and others.*[75]

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[74] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone", (London: George Newnes, 1921)

[75] *The Beacon Society*, "A Scion Society of the Baker Street Irregulars", FAQs [En Ligne]

With such a large scale of publication, it is no wonder that the detective has become a world famous character. As the stories were exported, the same desire to transpose these plots that emerged in the detective's birth nation appeared in the countries conquered by Sherlock Holmes.

We have already seen how the United States participated in the building of Holmes' myth, as one of the most popular persons to ever play Sherlock Holmes, William Gillette, was an American. Several films were made by American directors, but none of them really popular nor memorable in the whole Holmesian tradition. However, the American producer Sheldon Reynolds came out with an interesting TV show between the years 1954 and 1955 – and interesting fact, in was actually shot in France. This program is worth mentioning because it was one of the first television shows – and the only American one until the very recent *Elementary* (2012) - to feature Holmes and Watson. However, neither the stories nor the characters' treatment were really faithful to Conan Doyle's creation, and if it was a rather good entertainment, reasonably well received by the American public, it never made it to the annals of the Holmesian myth.

One of the most outstanding "foreign" Holmes adaptation has come from across the globe. Indeed, there are many critics stating that the best Sherlock Holmes is…Russian. Indeed, Vasily Livanov played Holmes in the 1979 Russian television show untitled *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson* (*Приключения Шерлока Холмса и доктора Ватсона*), alongside with Vitaly Solomin as Dr. Watson *(Annex 22)*. This amazingly faithful show and the actors' performance received an incredibly good response, especially from the English-speaking viewers who *"had to wait five years to enjoy such authentic depictions of the detective and the doctor."*[76] Vasily Livanov was even awarded the British Order of the British Empire for portraying Sherlock Holmes.[77] As Livanov himself said, in all humility*: "The Conan Doyle stories had been made into many films before us, but, as I see it, our characters are remarkable in being very human and convincing. This is probably why the British recognized our film to be the best European version of its kind."*[78]

The characters are indeed very human and the emphasis is put on Watson and Holmes' relationship. Their friendship is really powerful, and based on a mutual respect and a genuine

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http://www.beaconsociety.com/FAQs.html

[76] Roger Johnson and Jean Upton, *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* (The History Press, 2012), p.95

[77] Mitzi M. Brunsdale, *Icons of Mystery and Crime Detection: From Sleuths to Superheroes* (Greenwood Press, 2010), p.466

[78] Vasily Livanov in *Lifestyle: A Russia Journal Publication* Issue No.2 (45) - 24, January 2000

affection. Livanov's Holmes is a much warmer Holmes compared to most of his Western counterparts, he does not seem like such a socially inapt character, and since drugs were formally banned in the Soviet Union at this time, his cocaine consumption is never mentioned. The Russian version chose to accentuate the chivalric side of Holmes rather than his eccentric attitude, and to emphasize the humor displayed by the detective in the original stories, rather than his moody behavior. If this is questionable regarding the faithfulness to Conan Doyle's character, one has to remember that the USSR was not a free nation, and that censorship was still very active. Without going as far as to say every production had to be communist propaganda, fictional characters still had to represent positive qualities, they still had to be role models. That is why this Holmes is a much more balanced and kind character than the one Conan Doyle depicted. Watson, for his part, is a very strong, active and brave character, almost every inch as interesting and clever as the detective, but not in the same way. Besides, it is interesting to point out that in the adaptation made of *A Study in Scarlet*, the fact that Watson went to Afghanistan as an army doctor is not stated as such in the final version of the show, but instead it is said that Watson went to *"colonies in the East*". Indeed, in 1979 the Soviet Union had just sent troops in Afghanistan, and again, censors did not want any parallels to be drawn between this character and the current situation, so they had the word "Afghanistan" voiced-over and replaced by something else, so that this detail was not mentioned.[79]

In Russia, the appeal for Sherlock Holmes was powerful, people seem to have been fascinated by this brilliant Victorian detective and his gentlemanly manners. As said by the director of the show, Igor Maslennikov:

> *Anyone who goes to him feels secure. He is reliable. Whereas the police are to punish someone, Holmes wants to help the victims. He is the personification of gentlemanly behaviour. Audiences are always in need of someone with those qualities.*[80]

Maslennikov's version has often been said to be too idealized, and indeed, the director never went in England, so it is only his vision of the country that is displayed in the show: a proud and dignified nation, where manners are valued above all.

Once again Sherlock Holmes proved to be a character bringing hope and comfort to his audience. In a nation such as the USSR then, there was something about Holmes that was utterly

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[79] Olga Fedina*, What Every Russian Knows (And You Don't)*, (Anaconda Editions, 2013)

[80] Igor Maslennikov quoted in Peter Haining, *The Television Sherlock Holmes* (Carol Pub Group; Rev Upd Su edition, 1994)

reassuring. In addition to being the ideal Englishman people in Russia were so fond of, he also represented an idea of justice the Russians badly needed. As stated by author Olga Fedina in her books about cultural history in Russia: "*In a world where official justice was not seen as able to protect you, [Sherlock Holmes] was some higher authority to turn to, as a last resort. Besides, his justice is human justice, not state justice*."[81]

In 1929 *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* was banned in the Soviet Union for *"supposed occultism"*, but pirated versions of the book circulated and people still read the detective's adventures. Nothing seemed to be able to stop people from reading and loving Sherlock Holmes' stories, and when the television show came out, it was an immediate success.

The other adaptation we will mention here is another creation coming from far away from the detective's birthplace. It was far less recognized than the Russian Holmes, and most of all it is not aimed at the same public, but it definitely marked a generation and shows how far the detective's popularity spread. Indeed, there is a version of Sherlock Holmes' stories made in Japan, partially by the very famous film director Hayao Miyazaki. The animated television show, called *Sherlock Hound* (名探偵ホームズ *Meitantei Hōmuzu*, literally "Famous detective Holmes"), aired between 1984 and 1985 and was actually a Japanese and Italian co-production.

The characters of this series are anthropomorphic animals, as often in children-aimed material, especially in Japan. Obviously, the animals chosen to represent the characters have a symbolic meaning. Sherlock Hound, contrary to what his name suggests, looks more like a fox, whereas Watson is represented as a Scottish terrier *(See Annex 23*). Here we have the rather traditional symbolism of the cunning fox and the loyal dog, obviously showing the famous characters' major qualities on which the creators of the show chose to put the emphasis. Even though it was a much less serious project than many Holmes' adaptations, the show captured the essence of Sherlock Holmes' adventures as we know them. The plots were not completely faithful to the originals, but the very idea of Sherlock Holmes, the mysteries, the puzzles, Watson and Holmes' friendship, all these elements were indeed represented in the show. Sherlock Hound is in many regards a very faithful representation of Holmes, as he shows the same brilliant intellect and taste for puzzles, the same scientific curiosity and ingenuity, the same "bohemian soul", the same taste for music and talent for violin than his human counterpart. Watson, however, is loyal and very willing, but he resembles in many ways Nigel Bruce's clumsy and gullible portrayal of the doctor. His slow comprehension of the events forces Sherlock to pause and explain to him what is

[81] Olga Fedina, What Every Russian Knows (And You Don't), (Anaconda Editions, 2013)

going on, and it is seen as a way for the creators of the show to actually explain things to the audience, as Conan Doyle's Watson insight of the stories allowed the readers to understand the plot. Full of humor and action, those adventures marked a generation of children, in Japan but also in Europe, where Miyazaki's success allowed the series to be imported, and, as did the Russian adaptation, encouraged people – the children and their parents – to rediscover Conan Doyle's stories.

These examples of Russian and Japanese adaptations show how far away from England the whole Sherlock Holmes' myth travelled, and the wide range of people the detective's adventures fascinated.

In this section, thus, we saw how the whole Holmesian mythology was much more than what can be read in Conan Doyle's short stories. It is a complex mix of the "Canon" and elements of popular adaptations. Every one of these famous adaptations is the reflection of an era and added its particularity to the whole Holmesian edifice. *"[…] each generation finds something new to meet their own requirements in that Holmesian world which is ever the same, yet always new"*[82]

Now that we have seen the different faces of Sherlock Holmes through many of the past versions made of his adventures, we can perceive what the character grew to become, what remains of this character in nowadays' public consciousness, and thus see what is really essential to his appeal.

[82] P. Weller & C. Roden, *The Life and Times of Sherlock Holmes*, (New York, Avenel, NJ : Crescent Books, 1992)

III. The essential Sherlock Holmes: The Detective, now and always

Sherlock Holmes comes from very far away in history: he transcends generations, has been to distant countries then back to Europe. What remains of this character in todays' representations? What are the things that have always fascinated people, whatever the time or the place of those innumerable adaptations?

A. BBC *Sherlock* (2010)

The BBC show is too recent to be considered as a milestone in the construction of Sherlock Holmes' mythology. However, it is undeniably a memorable show which has done exactly what *Granada* did: renew people's interest in the character, and make them read Conan Doyle again. BBC Sherlock is definitely the Holmes of our generation, the one who was at the origin of the same wave of fascination as Conan Doyle's stories. People are obsessed with details of the show, exactly as people were obsessed with details of the short stories. People cried, mourned and protested with "I Believe in Sherlock Holmes" signs when the great detective fell to his death, exactly as the Victorian readership did when Conan Doyle threw his character from the top of the Reichenbach Falls. Since the first publications in *The Strand*, fans of the detective have been keen on writing new adventures for their beloved characters, pastiches or "apocryphal stories" as they are called, and this tendency never really weakened since then. However, BBC *Sherlock* awoke a new enthusiasm for those writings, and when, before the show aired, people were mostly writing stories set in the Victorian era and featuring the Doylean characters, people are now writings tons and tons of new kind of pastiches, "fan-fictions", set in the world of *Sherlock*. *"Currently, the Sherlock-based works of fiction posted to fanfiction.net – […] set exclusively within the world of the television series – number 4,305 (August 12, 2011)."*[83]

At first, the show might seem completely unfaithful to the Canon. Indeed, our favorite detective and his doctor friend are removed from their Victorian setting, and made part of our world: they evolve in 21st century London, use high-technology and call themselves "John" and "Sherlock". However, the show shines with elaborate references to the original, and a profound knowledge

[83] Louisa Ellen Stein, Kristina Busse, *Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series* (McFarland, 2012), p.3

and respect for the canonical stories are to be found in every detail of the series. Moreover, the writers, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss being Conan Doyle devotees ensured that their characters would be absolutely true to the one they are based on; and indeed they are, on many aspects way closer to the original than most adaptations, even those based in Victorian London. As stated by critic Tom Sutcliffe: *"Flagrantly unfaithful to the original in some respects, Sherlock is wonderfully loyal to it in every way that matters."*[84]

One of the most powerful elements of Conan Doyle's stories was that the Victorian readership could really imagine Holmes and Watson as being real persons, as the author described them as evolving in the same world as theirs. By adding so many authentic details about daily life in Victorian London, Conan Doyle gave his readers the feeling that Holmes was one of them, and by doing so he made his character feel tangible and familiar. BBC *Sherlock* show runners did the same: by transposing their Sherlock Holmes into a contemporaneous world, they allowed the viewers to experience this feeling again. Moreover, as people could read Watson's narration of the story every month in *The Strand* and imagine that these were real excerpts from the doctor's journal, the BBC played the same game Conan Doyle did, confusing people into wondering if these characters were really just fiction. Indeed, in the show, John Watson, played by Martin Freeman, is supposed to have a "blog", the modern version of his Victorian counterpart's journals, in which he tells every adventure that happens to him and to Holmes. The BBC playfully put online a blog (http://www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk) that has all the characteristics of a real website, and actually contains the doctor's narration of all the adventures that happened on-screen, but also all those that are briefly mentioned in the show.

Many people criticized the fact that Holmes, played by Benedict Cumberbatch, uses a lot of new technologies such as smartphones and GPS. But this is actually just an update of the tools used by Conan Doyle's detective. The Victorian Sherlock Holmes was a science and technology enthusiast, and he would make sure to always use the most advanced equipment available to conduct his experiments and solve his cases. And again, this use of objects familiar to the viewers, echoing their own way of life, makes the detective seem more real than ever. BBC Sherlock Holmes of 2010 is using a smartphone in an era when this product is a fairly recent improvement in our life, exactly as Victorian Holmes was using the telegraph, a device that had only appeared a few years before in Victorian people's existence.

Moreover, Conan Doyle's stories were using people's deepest fears about their time: poverty, terrifyingly quick advances in science, criminality, murders, thieves… The plot of Conan

[84] Roger Johnson and Jean Upton, *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany* (The History Press, 2012), p. 101

Doyle's short stories were echoing real cases happening at the time they were written, so Holmes could appear like the hero able to cure all the Victorian society's evils thanks to his brilliant mind. BBC *Sherlock* show runners are using many elements of the canonical stories, but, imitating their model, they also skillfully play with contemporaneous fears. Indeed, the iconography of terrorism is extremely vivid in this series: bombing attacks, taking of hostages, criminal groups… These are extremely reminiscent of many recent events, such as the numerous terrorist attacks in London underground. Other themes such as the dangers of genetic manipulations or state secrets and conspiracy theories, also part of our "contemporary horrors", are dealt with in the show, as a way to integrate what happens on the screen to our reality. Just like Conan Doyle's detective was, BBC Holmes is a man very much of his time and place.

Benedict Cumberbatch's performance as Sherlock Holmes is incredibly faithful to the original. Very close to Jeremy Brett's interpretation of the character despite the change of setting, Cumberbatch's Holmes is complex and tortured, combining humor and darkness, genius and blatant ignorance for subjects such as astronomy and public figures, an addiction for intellectual stimulation and the use of substitutes when work goes scarce, a very gentlemanly side mixed with a terrible understanding of social interactions, a taste for literature, music and disguise, a cleanliness and elegance balanced with a bohemian messiness… In addition to recreating Conan Doyle's Holmes' personality, Cumberbatch, much like Jeremy Brett before him, places great emphasis on his character's body language. Building on Doyle's descriptions and Paget's drawings, Cumberbatch reproduces the character's typical gestures and poses *(See Annexes 23, 24, 25)*. Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes is essentially Conan Doyle's, but belonging in modern day London.

As for John Watson, Martin Freeman gives him the exact strength of character Conan Doyle's imagined for his doctor-narrator. Indeed, as we saw earlier, Watson's personality is often caricaturized and many important traits of his personality are overlooked, resulting in a portrayal that is far from representing what Conan Doyle wrote about this seemingly simple, but actually rather complex character. As stated in a recent character analysis:

> *John Watson is both a doctor and a soldier, which says loads about his personality. He's both a caregiver and a protector; they both have equal weight in his personality, and mischaracterization of John often happens when one of these aspects is given a disproportionate significance compared to the other. I'm thinking of too-nice John or conversely, too-violent/angry John.*[85]

[85] "Will the Real John Watson Please Stand-Up", Sunday, November 11, 2012 [En ligne] http://sherlockcharacteranalysis.tumblr.com

Represented as either the bumbling, useless but loyal detective's companion or the hothead soldier friend, Watson is very often presented as a secondary character, and given no deepness. But Watson is, under Conan Doyle's pen, a very interesting character. He is the figure of the "everyman", he does not have any extraordinary aptitude, but he has deep, strong human qualities. He is clever – average clever maybe, but absolutely not silly as often misinterpreted – brave, kind, sensitive and selfless. But he is also a wounded man, both physically and mentally, a man who has seen war, who was on the battlefield and cannot, after this experience, return to a normal, monotonous lifestyle. Martin Freeman and the show writers really honor the canonical character by showing all these different aspects of his personality, by developing his background and by showing how essential he is to Sherlock, and how essential Sherlock is to him. Freeman's interpretation of the army doctor is sensible and truthful, and finally shows to the public how deep a character he is.

B. Sherlock Holmes in Modern Fiction

BBC *Sherlock* is undeniably the most faithful contemporary work of fiction made from Conan Doyle's creation. However, modern pop-culture seems to witness, these past few years, a renewed interest for the figure of the famous detective.

The first modern resurgence of the detective is to be found in a television show, that, at first, does not strike as being particularly linked with Conan Doyle's emblematic character. But with a closer analysis, one soon realizes that many details in the series are actually very much inspired from the detective's adventures and personality. In addition to many very small references to the detective's adventures, House – whose name sounds like *"a synonym of "Home" which is how Holmes pronounces his name"*[86], is a brilliant, genius doctor, who believes above all in the power of reason. Each episode is constructed like a detective investigation, and House – almost – always finds the solution by detecting details that everybody else misses because *"[they] see but [they] do not observe"*[87] Like the "early" Holmes who cared little about people but just wanted to stimulate his intellect, House is obsessed with solving the puzzle, the more difficult and obscure, the better.

[86] Henry Jacoby, *House and Philosophy, "Everybody lies"* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009)

[87] Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Study in Scarlet", (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1888)

> *Getting from suspect to whodunit, house looks at patients as fraud and liars, just as Holmes looks at clients. […] He breaks into their homes, steals their belongings, rummage through their drawers – anything to gather clues; again, same as Holmes.*[88]

This very interesting character is a loner, he is antisocial, cynical and arrogant, which are definitely characteristics shared by Holmes, although there is more darkness in House than in the detective. However, House has another common point with Sherlock Holmes: a close and dedicated friend, a person who helps him being a better man, who humanizes him, in a way. Gregory House has James Wilson – again, notice the similarity of the names, Sherlock Holmes has John Watson.

In 2009, Guy Ritchie produced a movie called *Sherlock Holmes*, featuring the famous detective and his friend, in a thrilling action movie. This Sherlock Holmes is far from being faithful to the original, as Robert Downey Jr. does not even remotely match Conan Doyle's description of Holmes and is far too goofy and messy, but the plot shares some common points with the canonical stories: the gloomy atmosphere of Victorian London, the mystery, Holmes' powers of deduction –although quite overlooked by the detective's ability to fight – and most of all the friendship between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson.

Very recently, in 2012, the American channel CBS decided to realize its own Sherlock Holmes show, *Elementary*, and like the BBC before them, they transposed Holmes in modern days… but not in London. Deprived of his Victorian and English setting, Holmes, played by Jonny Lee Miller, is now a messy, antisocial recovering drug-addict with a scruffy beard and a set of tattoos, occasionally helping New-York police forces in their investigations. Again, despite some quotes and references to the canon placed here and there in the episodes, faithfulness is really not the main concern of the show. Yet again, CBS Sherlock has things in common with canonical Holmes: a reliable friend – though gender bent as Joan Watson and interpreted by Lucy Liu, an incredibly brilliant mind and an extraordinary method of deduction.

From the comparison of those very recent adaptations, as well as those that we saw in the previous section, it seems that even when Doyle's Sherlock Holmes is deeply altered, there are two factors that remain unchanged: his faith in reason, and his friendship with Watson.

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[88] Henry Jacoby, *House and Philosophy, "Everybody lies"* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009)

C. The Power of Reason

If there is something primordial to the detective's appeal, it is his power of deduction. Indeed, the famous sleuth conveys the idea that nothing is scary if you can explain it rationally. As we have seen in the first section, Holmes was, thanks to his science, a light in the dark for Victorian people. The 19th century was a time when the swift advance of science put religion into question, and as crime and poverty were reaching peaks, people badly needed answers religion could not provide anymore. Sherlock Holmes, thus, represented a reassuring, rational answer.

> *The fictitious world, to which Sherlock Holmes belonged, expected of him what the real world of the day expected of its scientists: more light and more justice. The Holmesian cycle offers us for the first time the spectacle of a hero triumphing again and again by means of logic and scientific method… science, which many people hoped would lead to a material and spiritual improvement of the human condition.*[89]

What is terrifying is what you cannot possibly explain, the supernatural, the occult. And indeed, the only moment when Sherlock Holmes is afraid is when he cannot not understand something, when reason does not apply and when science becomes useless. This is fairly explicit in the original stories, as Holmes greatest fear appears to be the unexplained, when circumstances forces him to question his own rational beliefs. In "The Hound of the Baskervilles", Sherlock Holmes has a moment of hesitation, as the supernatural justification seems to be the only solution after all, and this moment of doubt makes him very uncomfortable. This is expressed even more explicitly in the BBC *Sherlock* version of this story, "The Hounds of Baskerville". Indeed, before Holmes finally understands the truth, and after he thinks he saw the *"gigantic hound"* with his own eyes, he is utterly and totally shattered.

> *Sherlock Holmes: What happened last night, something happened to me, something I've not really experienced before.*
>
> *Dr. John Watson: Yes, you said, "fear." "Sherlock Holmes got scared" you said.*
>
> *Sherlock Holmes: No, no, no, it was more than that, John. It was doubt. I felt doubt. Always been able to trust my senses, the evidence of my own eyes, until last night.*[90]

But as it turns out, there is indeed a rational, scientific justification to what Holmes thought he saw, and the sheer relief that the detective feels when he is ultimately able to find a

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[89] David S. Payne, Myth and Modern Man in Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the Uses of Nostalgia, Bloomington (Indiana), Gaslight Publications, 1992, p.51

[90] Excerpt from transcript of BBC *Sherlock* (2010) episode "Hounds of Baskerville".

logical explanation is undoubtedly shared by the viewers. Sherlock's faith in reason is crushed, only to be even more strongly reasserted when the solution appears, encouraging the audience to believe that reason can triumph of every seemingly complex situation. Moreover, "The Hound of the Baskervilles" and its adaptations demonstrates that science can, indeed, be used for wicked purposes, but that science is also what allows to defeat this very evil. Indeed, "The Hound", a scientific manipulation, was used for murder and personal benefits but it is thanks to Holmes' scientific and logical abilities that he is able to shed some light on the situation, and by doing so he saves lives and restores justice.

Sherlock Holmes is the embodiment of an optimist representation of science. Conan Doyle, from the start, depicts him as an accomplished scientist, able to bring meaning to this chaotic world by using tangible, scientific knowledge. For instance, he can trace the origin of the ash left on a crime scene, thanks to his extensive study and chemical analysis of an impressive number of tobacco varieties – about 140 in the original stories, 243 in the BBC version. Holmes' use of forensic science was, when the stories were published, something Victorian people had never read about in fiction works, and was, thus, both new and fascinating. Forensic science, as presented by Sherlock Holmes, was indeed a very innovative method of investigation for the time, and showed people a way of making the most astonishing deductions from the most trifling facts. Interestingly enough, this scientific approach of criminal investigation was something that was still developing when Conan Doyle wrote Holmes' adventures, and it has been proved that his detective used some ground-breaking detecting methods that were to inspire actual forensic techniques which are still used nowadays.

> *From blood to ballistics, from fingerprints to footprints, Holmes was 120 years ahead of his time, protecting crime scenes from contamination, looking for minute traces of evidence and searching for what the eye couldn't see.*[91]

Thus, instead of presenting it as something you are supposed to be afraid of, Sherlock Holmes and his scientific methods based on very concrete, tangible facts, show that science is actually the most reassuring thing ever. In Conan Doyle's stories and in every adaptation that has been made since then, Holmes, through his rational and scientific take on things, has established himself as a symbol of hope and relief.

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[91] "How Sherlock Holmes Changed the World", a PBS program produced by Love Productions in association with Channel 5 and National Geographic UK [En ligne] [Support Video] http://www.pbs.org/program/sherlock-changed-world

Moreover, a lot of element of Holmes' personality are altered trough the many adaptations that have been made of Conan Doyle's hero, but one thing remains roughly the same: his deduction system, and the way he explains his method. Indeed, the solution is always *"obvious"*: it is always something the detective deduces out of details that were right under everybody's nose, including the reader's or the viewer's. Even though his conclusions seem rather far-fetched at first, the detailed explanation of his process gives the feeling that it was, indeed, perfectly obvious and completely rational. He is for example, able to deduce what a man has been doing in the past hour, simply by observing his physical appearance in detail. As he says to Watson: *"I can never bring you to realize the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumb-nails, or the great issues that may hang from a boot-lace."*[92]

But the seemingly perfect rationality of this reflection is, actually, just an impression, because Holmes' process, if imagined after a real method, is not really based on rationality and cold logic, but rather on a good sense of observation coupled with a great deal of intuition and imagination. *"As a contemporary physician remarked, the Sherlockian mode of procedure although labelled as deductive and logical, is really intuitive and illogical, but it is so appealingly human that it is enjoyable in contrast with the tedium of a true analytic detective story."* [93]

Indeed, if Holmes' reasoning is actually pretty whimsical, it gives both the illusion of a real science, and the impression that this is something than any person with a trained mind could achieve. It makes people believe that they can do it themselves if they try hard enough, it makes them hope, believe in themselves, and fire their desire to surpass themselves. About this subject, the reporter Izumi Hansen states that *"During interviews, many people said Holmes was accessible often because he's a 'human genius.' He's in our world, but he's not beyond our own capabilities. He is who we can become."*[94]

Even if, deep down, we know that Holmes' method is fanciful and would probably not really prove efficient in the real world, we choose to forget it, in a way, because we need the message of optimism that it conveys, and it is actually powerful enough to comfort us. Francis O'Gorman, in his edition of "The Hound of the Baskervilles", comments that: *"what is important*

[92] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "A Case of Identity", (London: George Newnes, 1892)

[93] Michael Shepherd, *Conceptual Issues in Psychological Medicine* (Routledge, 2013)

[94] Izumi Hansen, "The close up: Sherlock Holmes" February 4, 2014 [En ligne] http://dailyuw.com

is not the application of logic but the pleasure that a reader may take from a writer's fantasy of it."[95]

We have seen that it was certainly not a twist of fate if Conan Doyle's stories knew such a success in such a troubled period of history, and it is probably not a coincidence either if there seems to be a resurgence of interest in this character every time and everywhere when and where people are confronted with life changing experiences and crisis.

The detective has never really died, but in these past few years, he has been, once again, literally everywhere. As our generation, much like Victorian people, is facing economic crisis, the threat of global warming, alarmingly fast technological and scientific advances, Sherlock Holmes and his science of deduction are still powerful symbols that help us cope with reality.

D. The Power of Friendship

If Sherlock Holmes, throughout the years and the various adaptations of his adventures, never strays from his implacable power of deduction, he is also inseparable from something else, or rather someone: his *"good friend Doctor Watson."*

Indeed, regardless of the way the good doctor is portrayed, whether he is too clumsy and foolish or too irascible and violent, one thing never changes: he is always the dedicated friend of the detective, and the detective always seems to trust him more than anybody else. Firstly, it is important to point out, once again, how essential to the popularity of Holmes Watson is. Indeed, as the author Charlotte Anne Walters says:

> *We only know of Holmes' greatness through Watson. It's like that strange old saying about the tree in the woods – if a tree falls in the middle of a wood and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? Would Holmes be great if Watson wasn't there to tell people about it?* [96]

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[95] Francis O'Gorman, *The Hound of the Baskervilles:* with "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (Broadview Press, 2006)

[96] Charlotte Anne Walters, "Holmes and Watson – who needed who the most?" February 1, 2012 [En Ligne]
http://barefootonbakerstreet.wordpress.com/

And indeed, Watson is the one who, through his writing of Holmes' adventures, allows the public to even know about Sherlock Holmes. Without Watson, the detective would be nothing but a sort of lunatic who occasionally helps the police with his intellectual abilities, only in order to distract himself from the dullness of existence. Thanks to his friend and biographer, he becomes a public figure, someone notorious, publicly recognized and admired in spite of his eccentricity. Without his friend, he would probably, sooner or later, have fallen into a circle of narcotic consumption and destroyed himself. But with the notoriety he gets from Watson's publications, Holmes acquires a wide customer base, and can make a living out of his greatest passion: solving difficult cases.

In a way, the detective cannot function without his doctor friend, perhaps even more than Watson needs Holmes. Indeed, Holmes *needs* Watson and would probably lose himself without a friend by his side to help him deal with reality and provide him with a model of stability and humanity. As he says to Watson, he would be *"lost without [his] Boswell"*[97]. Watson, however, *chooses* Holmes, he chooses to live with him when he could have settled down and lived a "normal" life. But he chooses the detective and his thrilling way of life, probably because his experience of war prevents him from returning to a more peaceful and monotonous existence.

On many occasions, Holmes stresses how essential Watson is to him, and even to his resolution of the cases. The doctor offers him a different perspective on things, and allows him to see the events in a way he would never even have considered if it had not been for his friend. Moreover, Holmes sometimes lets the thrill of investigation cloud his judgment, and there are many times when, without Watson, this would have been fatal to him. One example of this in the canon is what happens in "The Adventure of the Devil's foot". Indeed, the detective wants to solve the case so badly that he experiments a dangerous poison on himself. Watson, who has agreed to stay by Holmes' side even though he knew it was a dangerous situation, realizes that it could not end well and stops the experiment before it is too late. Without Watson's discernment, bravery and quick reaction, it would have been the death of Holmes, of them both.

> *'Upon my word, Watson!' said Holmes at last with an unsteady voice, 'I owe you both my thanks and an apology. It was an unjustifiable experiment even for one's self, and doubly so for a friend. I am really very sorry.'*

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[97] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, "A Scandal in Bohemia", (London: George Newnes, 1892) James Boswell was a 18th century writer, best known for his biographies. Holmes refers to the fact that Watson writes his life story.

> *'You know,' I answered with some emotion, for I have never seen so much of Holmes's heart before, 'that it is my greatest joy and privilege to help you.'*[98]

Despite his apparent coldness, Holmes knows how precious Watson is to him, and if he often appears insensitive and ungrateful, he is actually thankful for Watson's loyalty and dedication. Even if the times when he tells Watson how much he owes him are rare, the simple fact that this antisocial genius even bothers to tell him at all, even once, shows the importance the detective attaches to the doctor.

Their relationship is based on mutual respect: Watson never cease to praise Holmes' qualities, and proves to be dedicated and sincerely attached to him, and Holmes proves to really care about him and to value Watson's intellect. He obviously knows that his friend does not have his intellectual abilities, but he also knows that the way Watson thinks can help him understand many things he cannot grasp because of his superior intelligence. In 'The Hound of the Baskervilles", Sherlock asks Watson for his opinion, and as the doctor makes a completely wrong deduction, the detective, rather than mocking his lack of vision, encourages him:

> *I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.*[99]

This genuine, deep, and incredibly long-lasting friendship is without a doubt one of the fundamental reasons for the success of Conan Doyle's stories. The way Conan Doyle describes their relationship is such that their sincere affection for each other is beyond mere friendship, yet it is no quite a romantic tie. It is something special and strong, and even if the nature of their relationship has varied according to the era and the different adaptations, their mutual respect and fondness for each other, and their undeniable inter-dependency has always been, and will always be the basic fundament of their characters.

They are two symbols that cannot be separated: Holmes represents faith in reason, and Watson reminds us of the value of human nature. As stated in an analysis on the two men's friendship:

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[98] Arthur Conan Doyle, *His Last Bow* "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot" (London: George Newnes, 1910)

[99] Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* (London: George Newnes, 1902)

> *Holmes and Watson reflect the conflicting aspects of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character and culture. He was born in 1859, in the middle of the Victorian age, when the emotional excess of the Romantic Rebellion against the critical cynicism of the Enlightenment Rationalism was at its climax. […] In many ways, it's this marriage of the Romantic and the Enlightenment that makes the stories and the characters of Holmes and Watson so enduring; they complement one another, offering something for both head and heart.*[100]

Their incredible bond gives us hope in a world in which people can sometimes feel very lonely. It shows us that even if, like Holmes, you do not conform to a certain norm, or if like Watson, you do not have incredible abilities, you can still have something special, and achieve great things.

[100] "Holmes and Watson: The Adventure of the Iconic Relationship", 26 January, 2014 [En Ligne] http://sherlockcares.com

CONCLUSION

When he created his first Sherlock Holmes' stories, more than a century ago, Arthur Conan Doyle was far from imagining how global and permanent his character would become. But his detective was going to mark the world for ever, never to return in the shadows. As he appeared in a time when people desperately needed answers and comfort, he soon became an optimistic figure, and still has this function today. The famous detective, with his impossible, yet so deeply believable science of deduction, cast a light in a dark period, when the world was perceived as too frantic and frightening, and when the discoveries made by science caused religion to lose its soothing power over people's minds. He was the gentlemanly, deeply British figure, representing both the old-fashioned values of an England remembered with nostalgia, and the promises of a future that was not so scary after all. His adventures were powerfully fuelled by the crisis and horrors of his time, and served as a kind of catharsis for the readers. Not only could people find a kind of liberation in reading about their own troubles in Conan Doyle's stories, but as the detective always brought a rational solution and justice to these terrifying problems, he was also a figure of hope. But he could not bring this hope by himself, and one shall never forget that the cold, rational Sherlock Holmes cannot function without the humanizing companionship of the good Doctor Watson. Their friendship, symbolic fusion of the Romantic and the Enlightenment, is the core of each of their stories, and one of the main ingredients of these characters' lasting charm, with Sherlock Holmes' science of deduction.

Even when times have changed, Sherlock Holmes has never lost his appeal. Because every generation of every corner of the world faces a different kind of crisis, Sherlock Holmes and his reassuring tales about justice, reason and friendship will always be needed, and that is how and why he has become the mythical figure he still is nowadays.

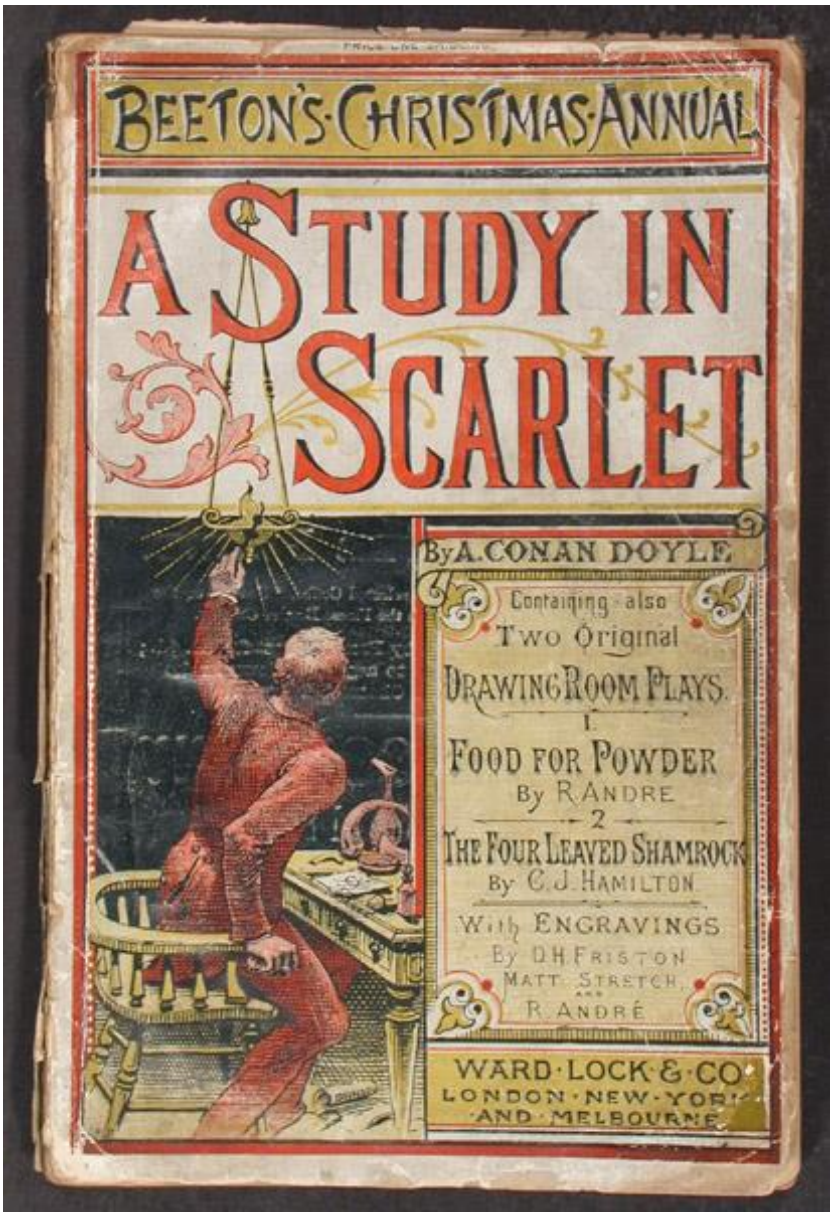
Such a myth has drawn the attention of many scholars and analysts, and Sherlock Holmes is one of the most studied figures in the whole world of fictional characters. Over the years, Conan Doyle's work has been scrutinized, analyzed and examined by dedicated aficionados to reveal all the subtleties of the characters, their personalities, their lives, their environment… The favorite exercise of these meticulous observers is the reconstitution of Holmes' and Watson's exact time-line. Indeed, Conan Doyle has often been denigrated for his lack of consistency in the chronology he applied to his characters' lives; the fans thus decided to fill in the blanks on the canvas and find a way to give meaning to the inconsistencies. Societies of Holmes' devotees have appeared all over the world, gathering every year to celebrate the world's most famous detective. One of their most ancient and traditional occupation is to play the "Great Game", consisting in regarding Conan Doyle's fictional characters as real, historical figures, whose adventures were actually written and

published by Doctor Watson. When playing “the Game”, they reflect upon details of Holmes and Watson’s lives, as well as the other characters featured in the stories, as if they were actual, flesh-and-blood people. This is how, for instance, we can find many seemingly serious publications about, for instance, Sherlock Holmes’ family background, or reflections about the private life of Doctor Watson…. Amongst the most famous of these societies are The Baker Street Irregulars, named after the group of street urchins helping Holmes on many occasions, in the stories. This group of Sherlock Holmes’ enthusiasts was created in 1934, and is still very active nowadays, a further proof of the undying fascination enhanced by the detective.

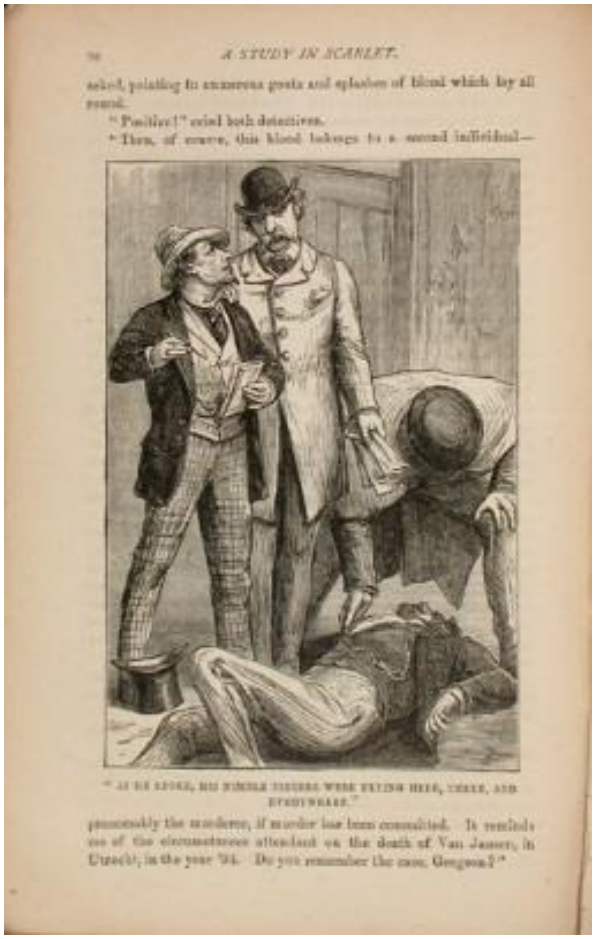
However, if it appears that there are still purists and dedicated fans who are devoted to the facts as described by Conan Doyle, Holmes seems to be a character who has been, over time, assimilated by pop-culture, absorbed until nothing remained of him but a concept, an idea. People all over the world know about Sherlock Holmes, whether they have read the stories, have seen a movie or have watched a television show about him, or even just know the name without having any actual experience of the character. His stereotypical image, with the deerstalker, the pipe and the big magnifying glass, has been used an infinite number of times, and can still be found on a daily basis, sometimes in the most unexpected places: in advertisements, on tobacco pipe tins, on postcards from England… witnessing to the fact that Sherlock Holmes has gone even beyond the framework of a fictional character, and has become a symbol of the quintessential detective, and sometimes a representation of the typical Englishman.

One might wonder if, a hundred years from now, Sherlock Holmes will still resonate in people’s mind as it does nowadays. The omnipresence of this character, deeply rooted in our cultural history, and the strong fascination he still has a century after his creation, seems to indicate that this character, along with the values he carries with him, are not meant to diminish any time soon.

ANNEXES



ANNEX 1 : *BEETON'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL*, LONDON: WARD, LOCK & CO., [1887]
(SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.INDIANA.EDU/~LIBLILLY/HOLMES/ORIGIN.SHTML)

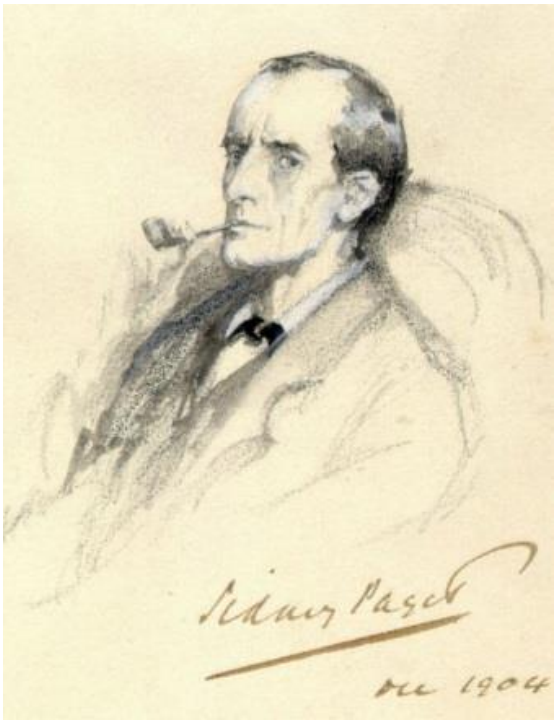


ANNEXES 2 & 3: D.H. FRISTON'S ILLUSTRATIONS IN *BEETON'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL*, LONDON: WARD, LOCK & CO., [1887]
(SOURCE: HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/DAVID_HENRY_FRISTON & HTTP://WWW.INDIANA.EDU/~LIBLILLY/HOLMES/ORIGIN.SHTML)

ANNEX 4: CHARLES A. DOYLE WITH YOUNG A.C. DOYLE (SOURCE: HTTP://THECHIVE.COM)

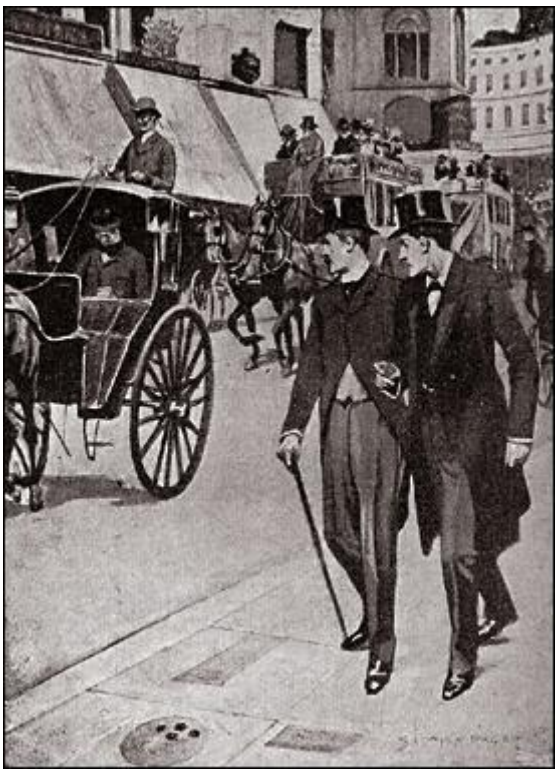
ANNEX 5: CHARLES DOYLE'S HOLMES (IN THE MIDDLE) IN "A STUDY IN SCARLET" [1887] (SOURCE: HTTP://SHRINEODREAMS.WORDPRESS.COM)

ANNEX 6: WALTER PAGET (SOURCE: HTTP://WWW3.WESTMINSTER.GOV.UK)



ANNEX 7: SIDNEY PAGET'S REPRESENTATION OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
(SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.ARTINTHEBLOOD.COM/GREENSHERLOCK.HTM)

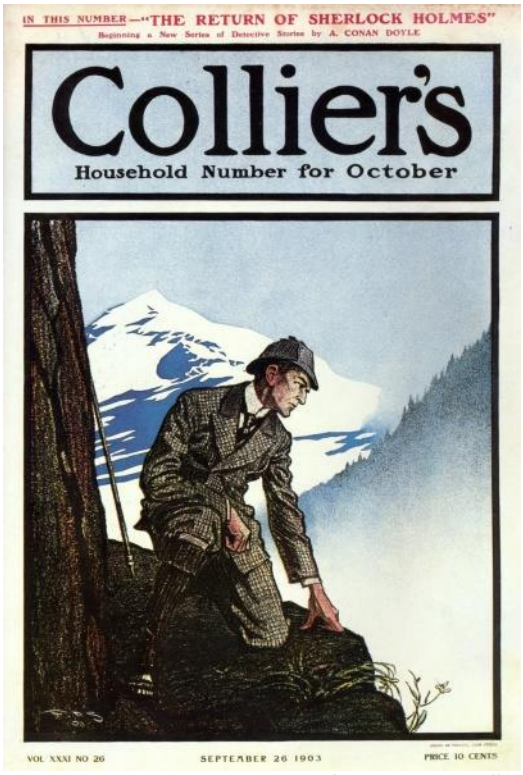
ANNEX 8: WATSON ON THE LEFT, WITH HIS TYPICAL BOWLER HAT, CANE AND MOUSTACHE SYDNEY PAGET "THE ADVENTURE OF THE SECOND STAIN" (1905) (SOURCE: HTTP://HOLMESARCHIVE.COM)



ANNEX 9: WATSON AND HOLMES IN ELEGANT VICTORIAN OUTFITS AND SHINY TOP-HATS SYDNEY PAGET, "THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES", 1901 (SOURCE: HTTP://HOLMESARCHIVE.COM)

ANNEX 10: SHERLOCK HOLMES (FRONT LEFT) WEARING HIS FAMOUS DEERSTALKER AND INVERNESS CAPE, SIDNEY PAGET, "SILVER BLAZE", 1892 (SOURCE: HTTP://HOLMESARCHIVE.COM)

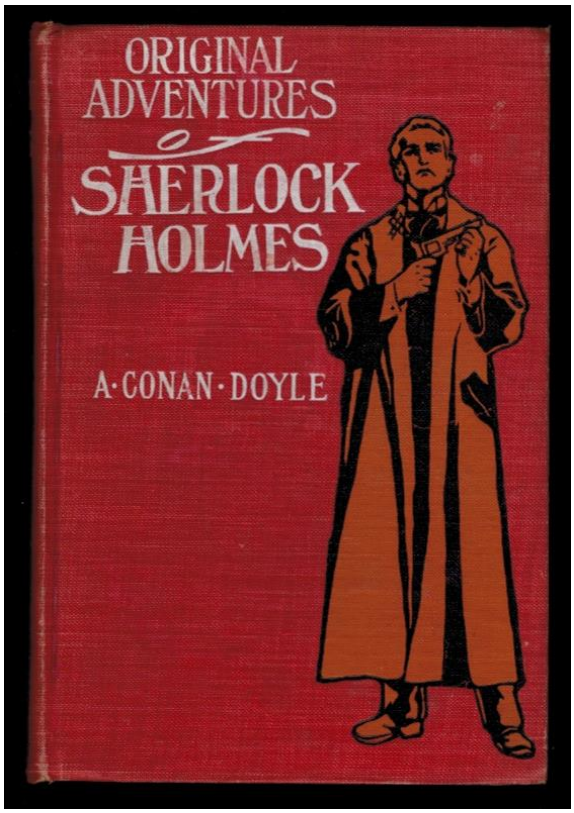
ANNEX 11: JOSEPH BELL WEARING THE DEERSTALKER AND INVERNESS CAPE (SOURCE: HTTP://BLOGJOB.COM)



ANNEX 12: FREDERIC DORR STEELE'S COVER FOR "THE ADVENTURE OF THE EMPTY HOUSE" (SEPTEMBER 1903) (SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.SSHF.COM)

ANNEX 13: SHERLOCK HOLMES SMOKING THE PIPE, BY SIDNEY PAGET, "THE ADVENTURE OF THE GREEK INTERPRETER" (1893) (SOURCE: HTTP://IGNISART.COM)

ANNEX 14: WILLIAM GILLETTE'S SHERLOCK HOLMES SMOKING THE CALABASH PIPE (SOURCE: HTTP://NNDB.COM)



ANNEX 15: *ORIGINAL ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* BY PUBLISHER R.F. FENNO & COMPANY (1903) FEATURING WILLIAM GILLETTE'S HOLMES AS ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE STORIES.

ANNEX 16: BASIL RATHBONE AS SHERLOCK HOLMES, WITH THE MAGNIFYING GLASS.
(SOURCE: HTTP://OUTSIDETHEBELTWAY.COM)

ANNEX 17 AND 18: BASIL RATHBONE AND NIGEL BRUCE AS HOLMES AND WATSON AND THEIR MICE COUNTERPARTS FROM *THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE (1986)*, WITH MOUSE DR. DAVID Q. DAWSON LOOKING LIKE BRUCE'S WATSON.
(SOURCE: HTTP://TOUTLECINE.CHALLENGES.FR & HTTP://ARSENELUPINETLESAUTRES.WORDPRESS.COM)

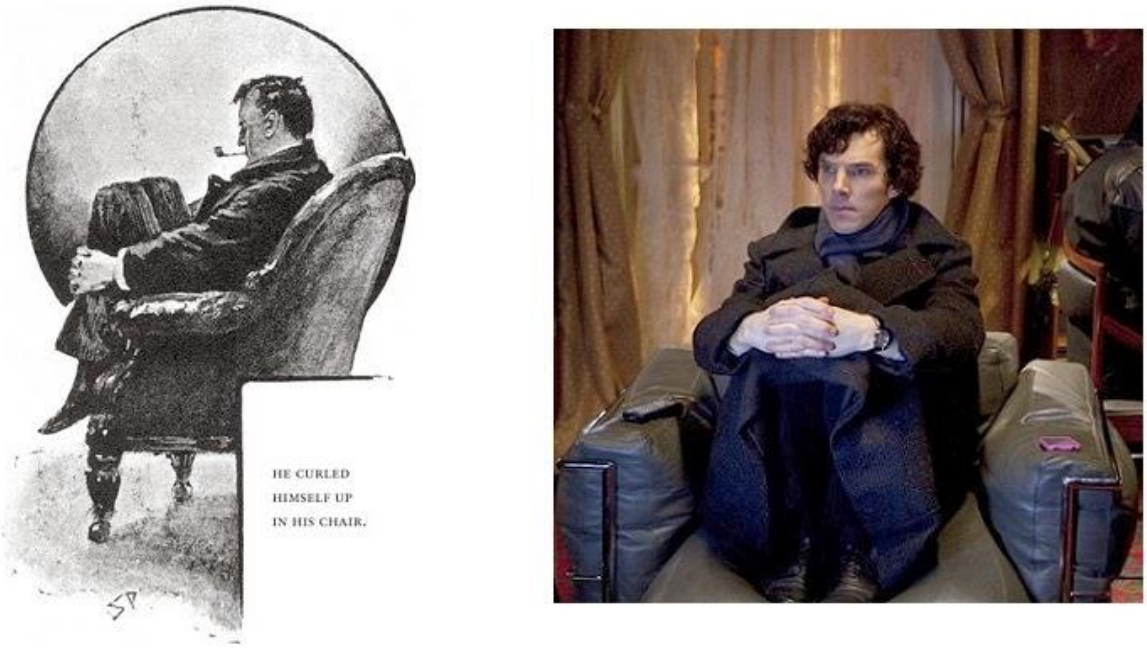
ANNEX 19: JEREMY BRETT RECREATING PAGET'S ILLUSTRATION OF THE "ROSE SPEECH" FROM "THE ADVENTURE OF THE NAVAL TREATY" (1893) (SOURCE: HTTP://BRETT-HOLMES.LIVEJOURNAL.COM)

ANNEX 20 : JEREMY BRETT RECREATING PAGET'S ILLUSTRATION FOR "THE MAN WITH THE TWISTED LIP" (1919) (SOURCE: HTTP://BRETT-HOLMES.LIVEJOURNAL.COM)

ANNEX 21: JEREMY BRETT RECREATING PAGET'S ILLUSTRATION FOR "THE ADVENTURE OF SILVER BLAZE" (1892)
(SOURCE: HTTP://WILLOWMANSDAUGHTER.TUMBLR.COM)

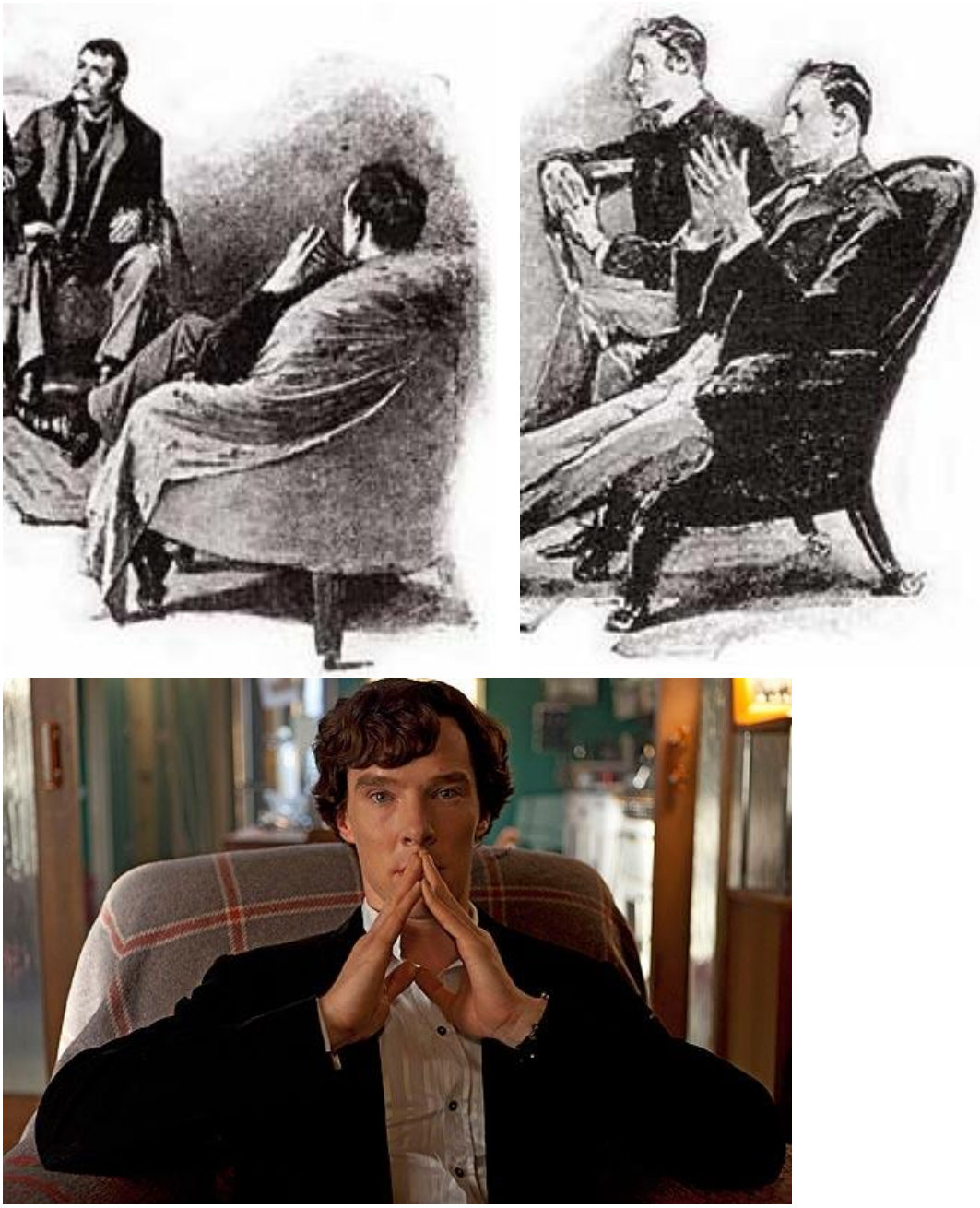
ANNEX 22: JOHN WATSON AND SHERLOCK HOLMES INTERPRETED BY RUSSIAN ACTORS VITALY SOLOMIN & VASILY LIVANOV FOR RUSSIAN ADAPTATION BY IGOR MASLENNIKOV (1979) (SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.REALUSSR.COM)

ANNEX 23: DR. WATSON AND SHERLOCK HOUND IN JAPANESE-ITALIAN ADAPTATION OF SHERLOCK HOLMES,
***MEITANTEI HŌMUZU (1984)* (SOURCE: HTTP://RU-SHERLOCKIANA.LIVEJOURNAL.COM)**



ANNEX 24: SIDNEY PAGET'S HOLMES IN "THE RED-HEADED LEAGUE" (1891) AND BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH'S HOLMES ADOPTING THE SAME POSE. (SOURCE: HTTP://BUDDY2BLOGGER.BLOGSPOT.COM)

ANNEX 25: SIDNEY PAGET'S ("THE VALLEY OF FEAR", 1915) AND CUMBERBATCH'S HOLMES ADOPTING THE SAME STRETCHING POSE
(SOURCE: HTTP://HOLMESARCHIVE.COM & HTTP://VENETIANBLOND.BLOGSPOT.COM)



ANNEX 26: HOLMES JOINING HIS HANDS TO THINK, IN PAGET'S DRAWINGS AND IN BBC *SHERLOCK* **(SOURCE: HTTP://HOLMESARCHIVE.COM AND HTTP://NINERIVERSWELLNESS.COM)**

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Table des matières

RÉSUMÉ

Ce mémoire de Master 1 Recherche Spécialité Anglais questionne un phénomène littéraire de grande ampleur : le célèbre détective Sherlock Holmes. Ce questionnement se base sur l'observation de la longévité et du caractère universel de ce personnage de fiction, dont l'identité-même a dépassé, au fil du temps, le strict cadre de sa création. Ce mémoire mène une réflexion sur les raisons du succès universel de ce personnage, que l'on peut retrouver à toutes les époques et dans le monde entier, décliné à l'infini et qui s'immisce à la fois dans la vie quotidienne et dans les différentes formes que peut prendre la culture (littérature, art, cinéma, télévision...). Ce travail de recherche s'appuie sur la lecture des nouvelles originales, écrites par Arthur Conan Doyle, sur l'autobiographie de ce dernier, ainsi que sur l'étude des différentes adaptations et pastiches que suscita le succès des aventures du célèbre détective. Pour compléter ces lectures et visionnages, ce mémoire est nourri des différentes réflexions précédemment menées autour du personnage et de son auteur. A celles-ci viennent s'ajouter des lectures sur le contexte de création de Sherlock Holmes et notamment d'ouvrages en rapport avec l'ère Victorienne, qui doit être prise en compte afin de mieux comprendre le personnage.
L'idée principale qui ressort de ce travail de recherche est que Sherlock Holmes n'est plus, aujourd'hui, un simple personnage de fiction. Il est une idée, un concept, un symbole, et c'est pourquoi il semble si omniprésent, quel que soit le lieu et l'époque.

mots-clés : mémoire étudiant, Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, détective, ère victorienne, Angleterre, phénomène, universalité, intemporalité, symbole, icône, identité, adaptations

ABSTRACT

This paper, written in the course of a Research Master specializing in English studies, questions a wide-ranging literary phenomenon: the famous detective Sherlock Holmes. This reflection is based on the observation of this character's permanency and universality, whose identity transcended, throughout the years, the strict scope of its creation. This research paper considers the reasons of such a universal success, for a character who is referenced just about everywhere, whatever the time and place, who takes multiple forms in both our daily lives and in the diverse shapes taken by culture (Literature, art, cinema, television…). This study relies on the reading of the original short stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle, his autobiography, as well as the analysis of the various adaptations and pastiches that were made after the detective's adventures generated such a huge enthusiasm. In addition to these readings and viewings, this paper is complemented by previous reflections on the character and his author. This research work was furthermore completed thanks to the reading of documents regarding Sherlock Holmes' context of creation, the Victorian era, as this period had a very important role to play in the understanding of the character. The main idea that came out of this reflection is that Sherlock Holmes is no longer, nowadays, only a character of fiction. He is an idea, a concept, a symbol, which makes him seem so omnipresent.

keywords : student research paper, Sherlock Holmes, Arthur Conan Doyle, detective, Victorian era, England, phenomenon, universality, timelessness, symbol, icon, identity, adaptations

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