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Re-imagining Sherlock Holmes as the hero in detective fiction



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Abstract:

This paper is set to present and examine the character of the world's most famous detective hero, Sherlock Holmes through its most recent adaptations: the BBC series *Sherlock* and the CBS series *Elementary*. For a better understanding of the character, contemporary detectives were contrasted to Arthur Conan Doyle's original one by looking at the four novels (*A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Valley of Fear*) and a collection of short stories (*The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*).

The focus is on how Holmes' character has been re-written and transitioned into the 21st century. It interrogated whether the sleuth's personality made the character still viable for contemporary audience. The issue of the character's persistent appeal through time within the detective genre was also tackled.

Key words: detective fiction, Sherlock Holmes, antihero, adaptation, Elementary

Resumen:

Este trabajo se propone presentar y analizar el carácter del detective más conocido en el mundo, Sherlock Holmes, a través de las adaptaciones más recientes: la serie *Sherlock* de la BBC y *Elementary* emitida por CBS. Para una mejor comprensión del personaje, los detectives contemporáneos fueron contrastados con el héroe original de Arthur Conan Doyle tal como está descrito en las cuatro novelas (*Estudio en escarlata*, *El Signo de los cuatro*, *El sabueso de los Baskerville* y *El valle del Terror*) y una colección de relatos cortos ("Las aventuras de Sherlock Holmes").

La atención se centró en cómo el carácter de Holmes ha sido re-escrito para facilitar su transición al siglo 21. Se reflexionó sobre si la personalidad del detective contribuyó para que el personaje siguiera siendo viable para el público contemporáneo. También fue abordado el tema del atractivo persistente del personaje a través del tiempo dentro del género detectivesco.

Palabras clave: narración policiaca, Sherlock Holmes, antihéroe, adaptación, Elementary

Introduction

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional hero, Sherlock Holmes, has become part of the popular imagination. "Elementary, my dear Watson!" is a phrase universally identified with the sleuth even though he never utters the words as such. In addition, even for those who have never read Doyle's works or seen any of the numerous adaptations, Sherlock Holmes is synonym with detective.

Holmes was perceived by the Victorian society as a superhuman who fought against the demons that troubled their imagination. Their fascination with the scientific detective is thus understandable. However, I was intrigued by the fact that along the years, Holmes was continuously brought back to public attention not only by the seventh art but also adapted to the small screen. I argue that Holmes' persistent appeal to the public lays in the fact that he is being portrayed as more humane and flawed. The major character traits which Doyle gave to his hero are not erased and not entirely deconstructed but redefined. Thus, the aim of this project is to present and analyze the character of the world's most famous detective hero, Sherlock Holmes, by taking a look at some of Arthur Conan Doyle's works. Subsequently, the focus will shift on how Holmes' character has been re-written in two modern day TV shows: *Sherlock* and *Elementary*.

The first contemporary adaptation on which I will center my attention is BBC's *Sherlock* (2010-2014) created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss. The show, which first aired in 2010, stars Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as Doctor John Watson. The second TV series is CBS's *Elementary* created by Robert Doherty. The American crime drama premiered in 2012 and stars Johnny Lee Miller as Sherlock Holmes and Lucy Liu as Joan Watson. The personality of the original Holmes will be contrasted with his contemporary counterparts in order to establish how his character has been re-written so as to suit modern-day audiences. It will be argued that Sherlock Holmes is still popular today not only by virtue of his

deductive skills but also due to his character, interests, passions, addictions and vulnerability despite his intelligence and rational thinking.

This project is the outcome of my love for literature and my interest in popular culture and film studies. While not my first choice of topic, analysing the Great Detective was the best decision; one I never grew tired of throughout the process of writing the paper.

I. Precursors of detective fiction

Detective fiction established as a genre in the nineteenth century, subsequent to the founding of the Metropolitan Police Force. Thus, the absence of detectives prior to the nineteenth century was due to the fact that the figure of the detective did not exist previously to 1829 when the law enforcement body was created.

Sherlock Holmes, the first fictional private detective was first featured in the novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and the successive stories were published in *The Strand* magazine. However, contrary to popular belief, Arthur Conan Doyle's scientific sleuth was not the first detective in fiction per se. Long before *A Study in Scarlet* was published, Edgar Allan Poe imagined inspector Auguste Dupin. Poe, who is regarded by some as the father of detective fiction, published in short-story form "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Rôget" (1842) and "The Purloined Letter" (1844). Wilkie Collins gave life to Sergeant Cuff in his novel *The Moonstone*, published in 1868. As a result, he is considered to have written the first detective novel. In France, Émile Gaboriau publishes the novel *Monsieur Lecoq* (1868) where he narrates the first case of a young policeman.

Nevertheless, all these precursors do not fit the image we currently have of a detective. Pre-Holmsian detectives did not possess the centrality Doyle's character assumes. For instance, Collins' Sergeant Cuff is not a protagonist in the novel and his appearance is brief. As a matter of fact, *The Moonstone* does not belong to the detective genre, but it is regarded as a sensation novel.

II. The detective formula

As mentioned before, Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes stories, which were published between 1887 and 1923, belong to the genre of detective fiction. In an article written for *The Guardian*, journalist Mark Lawson calls the sleuth "the genre's homepage" (2012). The name Sherlock Holmes is synonym with detective and at times even substitutes the word entirely.

The works of Conan Doyle were and continue to be a popular narrative due to the pattern they follow. At the beginning of the story, the detective's skills are presented through a minor incident. For instance, in *The Sign of the Four* in the chapter called "The Science of Deduction" Sherlock deduces only by looking at it that the watch Watson is wearing belonged to his elder brother who was an alcoholic. After the demonstration of intellectual and observational prowess there is the presentation of the mystery or the crime committed. In *The Sign of the Four* the chapter is called "The Statement of the Case". The crime is not presented as supernatural still it is shown as extremely difficult and almost insoluble. This is so not only as a praise to Holmes' talent when he will be able to provide an explanation to it, but also because he will only take cases that would challenge his prodigious mind.

Following the presentation of the case, we see the process of looking for clues, the investigation as such, then the announcement that Holmes has cracked the case. Ultimately, the pattern ends with the resolution where the mystery is explained and the criminal is apprehended or dies. The latter never happens at the hands of the detective who never gets his hands dirty.

This formula is at the heart of Doyle's works and has ensured the popularity of Sherlock Holmes. Nevertheless, there are many stories which follow the same pattern but failed at succeeding in becoming universally recognized. Thus, there must be other reasons, apart from the detective formula, which can explain our fascination for the man with a deerstalker hat and a smoking pipe.

III. The new police force and the rise of the detective

A reason for the augment of importance of the detective figure may be that the police force was a fairly young institution. What is more, as Clive Emsley points out, the working class was suspicious of the newly established police (1987: 27). The figure of the policeman was new at that time and did not inspire much trust. As a matter of fact, Sherlock Holmes is an aristocrat because Doyle decided to give his fictional detective the class of his readers in order to make him more likeable. The upper classes disliked the fact that a working class detective could pry his eyes in their affairs. So as to gain the favour of his privileged readership, Doyle went even further and portrayed the police as incompetent. He implies that without Holmes the police would be lost.

Until 29 September 1829 when the Metropolitan Police Force was founded by Sir Robert Peel and based at Scotland Yard, there was a lack of organization within law enforcement. In its early years, the police was more interested in preserving public order and less trained in capturing criminals. After the case of Jack the Ripper, who was never brought to justice, the public's faith in the force was undermined and policemen were not esteemed.

The figure of the practical and analytical detective came as a response to the figure of the policeman. As Gillespie and Harpham put it, Holmes was a "superhuman detective (...) able to reassure an anxious public that even the most heinous crimes could be solved" (2012: 449). During the increasingly globalizing Victorian era, society craved for a hero, a dragon-slayer who could remove any threat by using his almost supernatural genius. Readers took comfort in reading Doyle's detective stories since it calmed their fears and provided tranquillity. As long as a man like Sherlock Holmes existed out there, they too would be safe.

The role of an industrialized society in crime-associated anxieties

Emsley, Hitchcock, and Shoemaker remark in "London 1800-1913" (2013) that at the beginning of the nineteenth century London, which was subjected to a remarkable growth, was the old continent's largest city. During the Industrial Revolution there was an increase in people who

migrated from the countryside to the cities which in turn expanded day after day. London's population augmented from 1 million in 1801 to 7 million by 1911. What is more, Emsley, Hitchcock, and Shoemaker acknowledge that "in 1841 less than two-thirds of the capital's inhabitants had been born there" (2013).

The city became in the eyes of many a captivating but also a dangerous place. This urban related angst continues until nowadays, as proven by the fact that cities are sometimes referred to as "concrete jungles". This raised the concern of how law and order could be maintained as there was a growing anxiety in Victorian society about criminality. Due to the fact that society became larger and more diverse, the fear of crime increased during the nineteenth century. This new seemingly violent society made upper-class Victorians deeply concerned about their safety and quite keen on protecting their privacy.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Victorians and later Edwardians came to see the city as a menacing jungle. Holmes' stories became a reassurance that social order can ultimately be restored. The upper class, which compounded Doyle's readership, were also afraid that their private scandals would be brought out to the public by working class policemen. That is why they preferred their matters to be handled by someone they considered their equal, and who would be able to control the unknown threat:

In a late Victorian society rocked by scandals, how necessary was the reassurance that Holmes and Watson would protect the upper classes from blackmail and publicity, and give them the opportunity to settle their accounts in private. (Jann, 1990: 705)

The concern for escalating crime was in part spurred by the press which had "space to fill because of a decline in exciting, foreign, war news" (Emsley, 1987: 29). Due to modernizations in printing and the fact that more people had access to education and were able to read, the media gave crime more attention to gain readership. Newspapers, which became an important source of anxiety, portrayed crime as a growing epidemic which fuelled panic and exacerbated social restlessness:

Such newspapers inflamed, and perhaps even generated, the periodic crime panics that marked the era, and their fixation on crime contributed to a broad impression that crime was a serious threat. (Gillespie and Harpham, 2012: 463–464)

These fears and the Victorian desire for social order may have aided Conan Doyle's character at fascinating the popular imagination of the Victorian society. As Gillespie and Harpham point out, the rise of modern science helped reduce criminality but could do nothing for the uneasiness it induced. They continue by adding that literary detectives such as Holmes "offered an imaginary cure for an imaginary disease" (2012: 449). The same authors state that the Victorian context became the right time "for an imaginary hero who would stalk the criminal demons imagined by the public" (2012: 453).

IV. The scientific P.I.

Even though Conan Doyle was not a pioneer in creating the original fictional detective, he aimed at making Holmes the first "scientific" detective. In *The Sign of the Four*, through Holmes, Doyle insists upon the fact that "Detection is, or ought to be, an exact science, and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner" (2008: 3). Holmes' most notable characteristics are his "extraordinary genius for minutiae" and "cold science" (2008: 4). In addition, Rosemary Jann argues that Holmes' logic appears to be "impersonal and inflexible" which makes him the "practical agent of social order" (1990: 690).

Doyle, who studied at the University of Edinburgh Medical School, wanted to incorporate to his character the scientific method. What is more, according to Laura J. Snyder "Conan Doyle criticized his predecessor Edgar Allan Poe for giving his creation – Inspector Dupin – only the 'illusion' of scientific method" (2004: 104). Snyder continues by adding that Conan Doyle made Watson "remark that Holmes has «brought detection as near an exact science as it will ever be brought into the world»" (2004: 104). Thus, it was important for Doyle that his detective hero should have a scientific method. Doyle considered that other fictional detectives just stumbled upon the solution since they did not give enough clues for the reader to follow their thread of

reasoning. Doyle wanted to make clear through Holmes, that science was a key element in solving the crime.

Conan Doyle also mentioned that the character of Sherlock Holmes is inspired in Dr. Joseph Bell, who was his teacher at Medical School. Doyle had first-hand knowledge about the method of deduction and was fascinated by Bell's ways of treating disease. He took the skill he had observed in his professor and gave it to his fictional detective. Holmes does not only resolve the mystery but also explains how his power of deduction enabled him to achieve it. Nowadays, we are aware of the fact that our identity is shaped by society, influenced by our biology, by what we do, where we live even by what we read. In turn, our identity leaves marks on our body or on objects we use. Jann argues that "signs of moral and intellectual nature were indelibly inscribed on the surface of the body and particularly on the face" (1990: 693).

Doyle made Holmes able to read those signs of individuality in order to make his deductions. In *The Sign of the Four* Watson says that according to Sherlock "it is difficult for a man to have any object in daily use without leaving the impress of his individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it" (2008: 5). Jann states that Doyle was a pioneer in creating a detective "distinguished by his skill at reading the signs the body involuntarily leaves behind (...) everybody, criminal or client, unwittingly gives and receives marks that make its personality" (1990: 690). Holmes is also able to read people's feelings by paying attention to their facial expression. No one and nothing can escape the observation of his trained eye. What we will see in postmodern Holmes' is how they take their scrutiny and analysis of others to an extreme. In the end, the same ability which makes them brilliant detectives renders them social pariahs.

Sherlock Holmes, a post-Darwinian detective

Sherlock Holmes was no ordinary man, but one who answered to a greater authority which was science. Arthur Conan Doyle was born in 1859 and lived in the aftermath of a revolutionary theory. The same year of Doyle's birth, Charles Darwin published *On the Origins of Species*.

Ernst Mayr as quoted in Lawrence states: “A world view developed by anyone after 1859 was by necessity quite different from any world view formed prior to 1859” (2003: 133). Darwin’s theory not only revolutionised the world of science, but changed the worldview of his contemporaries.

Doyle came into contact with Darwin’s words at university. Subsequently, he rendered that philosophy in his works, especially in the adventures of Holmes. Thus, the universe of Sherlock Holmes becomes a Darwinian one in which change and science predominate. Lawrence suggests that this perspective “enables Sherlock Holmes to look everywhere for purpose and, ultimately, for meaning” (2003: 145). Through Holmes, Doyle says *A Study in Scarlet*:

From a drop of water (...) a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it. (2008: 23)

In 1870, the *British Quarterly* as quoted by Linda K. Hughes pronounced the Victorian age as one of scientific culture (1999: 35). Due to this expanding role of science in the public sphere, “anthropology and other sciences were also deeply pervaded by and embedded in other social discourses” (Hughes, 1999: 43). The scientific method had an immense prestige hence Doyle’s “scientific” detective is a mirror of the society of the time.

Sherlock Holmes intervenes when crime disrupts the order in society and with his brilliant insight and logic he restores society to its previous state of purity and innocence. Even though Victorians feared that crime was corrupting the entire society, Doyle’s stories come as a reassurance that it was not the case. In his works, Conan Doyle presents one instance in which order is tampered with. However, this happens only briefly, until Holmes is able to discover the criminal and remove the rotten apple from society, which goes back to normal. Holmes stories reassured Victorians by repeatedly confirming that he is above the disordered society not because he can prevent crime but by “ensuring that no disturbance long remains a mystery” (Gillespie and Harpham, 2012: 458). The science of deduction is presented in the Holmsian universe as an infallible tool.

As a matter of fact, Lawrence supports the idea that the detective's popularity is also due to the fact that Doyle rendered in his stories "a coherent vision of the universe in a post-Darwinian moment" (2003: 155). Holmes had all the answers because he was a man of science. Neither guesswork nor luck or supernatural elements influenced the outcome in the stories. Readers were encouraged into thinking that only science and logic can maintain help solve the puzzle and restore order. Authors Gillespie and Harpham argue that Holmes embodies the collective knowledge and way of thinking that "there is an answer to every question and a solution to every problem" (2012: 458). In a post-Darwinian time, science is the key to everything, even criminal behaviour. Thus, the detective ceases to be an individual and becomes the embodiment of the capacities of science. Holmes is a tool of reason, always there to protect society.

V. Adapting Sherlock Holmes

Since their publication in the nineteenth century, the original works have been adapted numerous times into different formats. Reynolds and Trembley refer to adaptations as "capturing the spirit" (1994: 12) of the author's work. Since as we have seen, the detective formula is not enough to capture the public's attention, when adapting a work such as Conan Doyle's one has to do much more than just copy the pattern. This essay argues the idea that Holmes' personality is part of the "spirit" of the work and plays an important role in capturing the attention of readers and viewers alike. What is more, Reynolds and Trembley believe that "the longevity of Doyle's fiction does not derive from the clever or careful construction of his plots but from such intangible aspects" (1994: 13). One of the intangible aspects Reynolds and Trembley refer to is the relationship between Holmes and Watson. The sleuth and his sidekick share a unique connection that is paramount to their characters. Their dynamic is what engages both the reader and the viewer.

Moreover, Reynolds and Trembley argue that in Doyle's Holmes stories, the detective is "a fantasy figure, eminently powerful, pursuing his vocation with supreme competence" (1994: 12). Sherlock Holmes is the embodiment of the classical detective, a godlike figure possessing

superhuman skills. His method and reasoning were plausible for nineteenth century readers who were living in a post-Darwinian era of scientific breakthrough. Nevertheless, in order to make him a more realistic detective, those who adapted Holmes for the small screen have made alterations both in his method and his personality.

Another key point, part of the same spirit of the original works is the fundamental role of Dr. Watson as the narrator. Reynolds and Trembley claim that in adaptations it is vital to maintain Watson's figure because his relationship with Holmes makes the latter a more human figure not just a superhero which "abound on fiction" (1994: 12). Modern day Holmes and Watson, as portrayed in *Elementary* and *Sherlock* define each other's character. They are inseparable and depend on one another.

From superhuman to antihero

If the Victorian Holmes is a clear scientific hero and even viewed as some kind of superhuman, adapted postmodern Holmes' tend to blur the line between hero and antihero. The early detectives are also defined by Gillespie and Harpham as having "powers that exceed anything ordinary people could attain" and of being "often asocial" (2012: 455). The latter statement suits modern Sherlocks, however, their "powers" are soothed in order to make them more believable but also more likeable for the audience.

The characteristic all three Sherlocks share is that they are "not agents of the state but are driven by their own inner need to discover the truth." (Gillespie and Harpham, 2012: 455). Doyle's Sherlock Holmes has some aspects in common with post-modern detectives. Sherlocks do not answer to any authority but their own. They are independent from the government and the police force. What is more, they do not enforce laws but constantly break or ignore them, coming into conflict with the official police. Gillespie and Harpham state that "Holmes remains a reassuring presence, in part, because his omniscience does not carry the threat of authoritarian surveillance and oppression" (2012: 459). He is only present when needed, unlike the official police.

In addition, Sherlocks take cases which challenge their intellect and do not care about the victims. The last statement will prove to be truer for Victorian Holmes than the contemporary sleuths. The two modern day small screen detectives show that they care about victims and even their own close friends. A more human side is added to the clinical detective. According to Polasek, postmodern detectives are also more “self-destructive and socially outcast” (2013: 387). As readers, we would never consider Doyle’s Holmes an outcast but a reasoning machine. The classical detective is perceived as a hero whose sharp mind is able to solve any puzzle. In contrast, postmodern Sherlocks drift away from this notion of hero and their personalities resemble more that of an antihero.

Some critics seem to view this practice of reshaping the detective into a non-traditional hero as an act of betrayal of the clearly defined figure of Holmes. Stephen Fuller as cited in Polasek states that detective fiction is defined by two rigid categories: the hero and the antihero. Fuller is against the “weakening of the boundaries” and goes on by saying that it is “complex, nonessentialist, and postmodern in nature” (2013: 387). Polasek also defines this as “muddying of categories” and “highly transgressive”. Despite these opinions, both *Sherlock* and *Elementary* gained the favour of the postmodern audience, both British and American.

Furthermore, in Polasek’s view, “post-millennial Sherlock Holmes is presented as a flawed-figure whose self-destructive genius must be managed by others” (2013: 392). She continues by adding that another aspect of postmodern adaptation is that Holmes is no longer an “armchair detective” but a “fast-paced and high-energy” one which was given a “modern technology-savvy makeover” (2013: 388). These aspects, which add to the personality of Holmes, make his character more plausible and are considered as paramount to his voyage into the twenty-first century. In order to survive, he is adapted and makes his transition into “a more complex post-modern antihero” (2013: 392). Contrary to the post-modern detective who has to prove himself at times, Victorian Holmes lives in a society where his abilities are valorised and sometimes seen as superhuman skills. Before explaining his method, he is seen as some kind of wizard on

the threshold between human and the omnipotent. Despite the fact that at some point Victorian Holmes may appear to be a magician, the explanation of his reasoning, leave readers no doubt that his investigations and method of deduction were all that was necessary to crack the case. Nevertheless, we never find out how Holmes came to possess such abilities. Doyle merely hints at the subject and we are never told explicitly how Sherlock Holmes acquired or inherited his abilities.

Conversely, in the TV series the producers build on his character by explaining his past. Thus, providing answers for his personality and talents. Contemporary Sherlocks are more human and less godlike. Consequently, it is easier for viewers to empathise with them and forgive some of their personality traits. The ways Victorian Holmes solved crimes and his clinical efficacy, nowadays seem quite farfetched. His contemporaries excused his numerous defects because they were amazed by his unquestionable reasoning. Albeit we no longer believe that his method is quite so accurate. Modern viewers enjoy Holmes' intelligence but also like being able to relate to the character. He may be brilliant, but he is also flawed and that makes us viewers feel better about our own defects.

VI. The classical versus the contemporary

6.1. The personality of the genius: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes

Becoming Sherlock Holmes

Little we know about how Sherlock Holmes became a scientific detective. Doyle did not explain Holmes' past or how he came to amass a great amount of knowledge and be attentive to detail. Gillespie and Harpham define Holmes as "an impossibility" (2012: 456). It is suggested that we know so little about the detective because it is unlikely such a person existed. Holmes' education and evolution into a superhuman detective remain a mystery because his abilities had to appear plausible. In "The Greek Interpreter", Watson points out that: "During my long and intimate acquaintance with Mr. Sherlock Holmes I had never heard him refer to his relations, and hardly ever to his own early life (2009: 406). Readers view his brilliant insight as partly acquired through "systematic training" and partly "hereditary" (2009: 406).

We become aware of the fact that he is an educated man from the first pages of *A Study in Scarlet* when Holmes is introduced to Watson as "an enthusiast in some branches of science" who is "well up in anatomy" and a "first-class chemist" (2008: 3). Nevertheless, readers are also given the impression that Holmes is a self-taught man. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Stamford, Watson's old acquaintance, introduced Holmes as a person who "has never taken out any systematic medical classes" (2008: 3). It is safe to assume that he has not received any formal schooling and he is for most part self-educated. As for the hereditary part of his talent, Holmes himself admits that it played some part in his capabilities. Watson is not at all convinced and attributes his friend's intellect to scientific training. However, in "The Greek Interpreter", Holmes informs him that he has a brother, Mycroft who "possesses it in a larger degree" than him (2009: 406). However, for Mycroft deduction is only the "hobby of a dilettante" because he has "no ambition and no energy" (2009: 406). Holmes concludes that cases cannot be resolved from an armchair implying that he is an active investigator and thus, better than his brother because he uses his talent to prove his theories.

Being Sherlock Holmes

In *A Study in Scarlet* we find out that Holmes does not indeed resemble his brother in apathy. He is quite energetic at work and passionate about science. As it is evident *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes “appears to have a passion for definite and exact knowledge” (2008: 4). He takes his “job” seriously and goes to great lengths in order to acquire new knowledge “when it comes to beating the subjects in the dissecting-rooms with a stick, it is certainly taking rather a bizarre shape” (2008: 5). He does that in order to “verify how far bruises may be produced after death” but those who see him think it is peculiar.

In addition, when he discovers a new test for examining blood stains he is “as delighted as a child with a new toy” (2008: 6). Holmes is very enthusiastic about his work. However, his zeal is seen in a negative way by those observing him perform his studies. Moreover, Holmes is described to Watson as someone who may get “a little too scientific” with a “cold-bloodedness” approach. It is implied that Sherlock would even endanger the life of a friend to prove a theory:

I could imagine his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid, not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of a spirit of inquiry in order to have an accurate idea of the effects. (2008: 5)

While Holmes has a case or he is involved in some kind of study, he is relentless. In *The Sign of the Four*, When Watson inquires if he is going to bed after a long day’s work, Holmes replies that he does not feel tired: “I never remember feeling tired by work, though idleness exhausts me completely” (2008: 52). Holmes implies that overworking does nothing to him. He is only exhausted when he is inactive. Watson also observes that Holmes’ nature is quite changing: “he was bright, eager, and in excellent spirits,—a mood which in his case alternated with fits of the blackest depression” (2008: 12). He can go from ennui to dynamism in the blink of an eye when a case is presented to him. The fact that he can put his mind to work brings him to life, as he expresses in “The Red-Headed League”: “The swing of his nature took him from extreme languor to devouring energy (2011: 35).

Holmes himself remarks that he is trying to avoid boredom and the quotidian and that the cases he takes enable him to do so: “My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so” (2011: 42). It would seem that when he has no case with which to occupy his time and mind, Holmes resorts to the use of drugs. He tells Watson that he created the profession of consulting detective because he abhors “the dull routine of existence” (2008: 2). Furthermore, he admits to “crave for mental exaltation”, the one working on a case provides him. Holmes is only satisfied when he has a puzzle in his hands:

“My mind,” he said, “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.” (2008: 2)

While some may be taken aback by his scientific fervour, others are quite astounded by his genius. When Holmes deduces where Watson had been, the doctor says: “You would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago” (2011: 4) implying that Holmes’s method might seem witchcraft for those who are not acquainted to his way of reasoning. As a matter of fact, in “The Red-Headed League” Watson even claims Holmes’ methods would make people “look askance at him as on a man whose knowledge was not that of other mortals” (2011: 35).

Holmes is also very respected by the inspectors whom he works with. For instance, in “The Greek Interpreter”, inspector Gregson is baffled by the way Holmes handled the case and said that “it is a mercy that you are on the side of the force, and not against it, Mr. Holmes” (2009: 415). In addition, when Holmes is summoned to give a helping hand in a case, Gregson is careful not to tamper the scene before Holmes’ arrival: “It is indeed kind of you to come, he said, I have had everything left untouched” (2008: 21).

Thus far we have seen that Holmes is not only highly regarded but also viewed as a superhuman. Surprisingly, readers also consider him to be some kind of emotionless machine. Upon seeing Mary Morstan, Dr. Watson is in awe with her beauty but Holmes says he did not

even notice it. At this, Watson replies: “You really are an automaton,—a calculating-machine! (...) There is something positively inhuman in you at times” (2008: 11).

In this connection, it is also worth mentioning that Holmes never spoke to Watson about his family. Watson admits that he has come to see Holmes as an orphan with no living relatives and he is shocked when the logician mentions he has a brother named Mycroft. What is more, Holmes’ reticence to talking about his early life and family produced in Watson and through him in the readers an “inhuman effect”. Holmes acquired a nearly divine aura and Watson saw him as “an isolated phenomenon, a brain without a heart, as deficient in human sympathy as he was pre-eminent in intelligence” (2009: 406). Watson is surprised to find out that Holmes is quite ignorant in some aspects such as in the case of the Copernican theory. To explain himself, Holmes tells Watson that the brain is like an “empty attic” and you have to choose carefully what type of “furniture” you decide to keep in it. From our modern-day perspective, we could imagine that he was describing a computer form which you can delete or add information. Holmes only keeps what he finds useful to his work as a detective.

View on women

According to Sherlock Holmes, as he argues in *The Sign of the Four*, women are “never to be entirely trusted,—not the best of them” (2008: 55). Moreover, he believes that women are a distraction and stand in the way of reasoning. It may seem that the sleuth does not think highly of women. Nevertheless, it seems that his mind changed after being outwitted by Irene Adler. In “A Scandal in Bohemia”, Watson, who never agreed with Holmes’ misogynistic commentaries, says:

The best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman’s wit. He used to make merry over the cleverness of women, but I have not heard him do it of late. (2011: 22)

In “The Man with the Twisted Lip” Holmes even acknowledges that: “I have seen too much not to know that the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoned” (2011: 108). In *The Sign of The Four* he says about Mary Morstan that she

is “one of the most charming young ladies” he ever met and that she possessed a “decided genius” (2008: 55). It seems that he came to terms with the fact that women are quite intelligent as well. Nevertheless, Holmes confides in Watson that he would never marry because it could interfere with his logical thinking:

(...) love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment." (2008: 55)

When Watson himself got engaged to Miss Morstan, Holmes “gave a most dismal groan” and said: “I feared as much (...) I really cannot congratulate you” (2008: 55). Because Watson is now involved in a romantic relationship, Holmes pities him since “emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning” (2008: 11). Love and personal relationships are seen by the detective as weaknesses. Watson says that “all emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind” (2011: 2). Feelings are described as “intrusions”, “distracting” factors and grits in a “sensitive instrument” that may harm “the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen”.

Ennui and use of drugs

When Sherlock was introduced to Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*, the doctor suspected that Holmes was using narcotics because on occasions his eyes looked dreamy and vacant. His suspicion will later be proven well-founded. Watson is against the use of drugs and warns Holmes that it would eventually affect his brain. Sherlock is aware of the negative physical influence, however, he finds drugs “transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind that its secondary action is a matter of small moment” (2008: 1). He later states that if he had an intriguing mystery to unravel he would “dispense then with artificial stimulants” (2008: 2). Therefore, Sherlock cannot live without brain-work and if he cannot stimulate his brain by using it to solve puzzles then he does it with drugs. Furthermore, when he has nothing to do Holmes gets bored to the point of delving into depressive states:

What else is there to live for? What is the use of having powers, doctor, when one has no field upon which to exert them? Crime is commonplace, existence is commonplace, and no qualities save those which are commonplace have any function upon earth." (2008: 7)

Watson knows that Holmes has many talents and recognizes them. Nevertheless, he is disappointed by the fact that Holmes resorts to drugs in the periods when no case occupies his mind. The doctor never misses an opportunity to manifest his dissent with the physical harming practice:

(...) chemistry eccentric, anatomy unsystematic, sensational literature and crime records unique, violin-player, boxer, swordsman, lawyer, and self-poisoner by cocaine and tobacco. ("The Five Orange Pips", 89)

Cocaine is for Holmes a kind of safety switch. When he has no case the pressure builds up in his mind until he can no longer cope with it. He uses drugs to avoid boredom and depression.

Sherlock Holmes is without a doubt a unique character. His super-human powers made his contemporaries overlook his personality flaws. Even if his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle tried to kill him off, readers kept him alive until nowadays and he will last as long as people will continue being intrigued by crime and fascinated by genius and science.

6.2. Reinventing the classical: *Sherlock's* take on Sherlock

Knowledge and skills

The TV series *Sherlock* delves deeper into the detective's personality by presenting aspects such as his past, education and family issues among others. In season one, we find out that Sherlock received higher education and went to university when Sebastian, the banker who hires the duo to find a staff member mentions that "we were at uni together" (S1. Ep.2, "The Blind Banker"). In addition, in "The Sign of Three" (S3. Ep.2) Molly Hooper, who works at the morgue, informs us that the sleuth is a graduate chemist.

Sherlock is still a brilliant logician; however, during the series we find out that he is not as infallible as Doyle's Holmes. For instance, when he needs advice on painting he goes to consult an expert. John is not only baffled by the fact that Sherlock needs advice but because he is actually willing to ask for it: "You need advice?" and Sherlock says: "You heard me perfectly. I'm not saying it again" (S1. Ep.2, "The Blind Banker"). Furthermore, when he sees Watson's latest blog entry which is entitled "Sherlock Holmes baffled" he indignantly tells his friend: "No, no, no, don't mention the unsolved ones". At this, John replies that "people want to know you're human" (S2. Ep.1, "A Scandal in Belgravia").

The fact that he is not presented as flawless may be explained through the fact that nowadays people appreciate intelligence; however, they do not like feeling stupid. In this respect, when Moriarty frames Sherlock making him look like a fraud genius, the detective points out that everyone will believe the lie because it is more convenient to see him as an ordinary man: "All my brilliant deductions were just a sham. No-one feels inadequate" (S2. Ep.3, "The Reichenbach Fall"). On the one hand, viewers are attracted by Holmes' intelligence. As Irene Adler puts it, "Brainy's the new sexy" (S2. Ep.1, "A Scandal in Belgravia"). On the other hand, the fact that his method is not entirely perfect makes Sherlock more human and this brings him closer to a 21st century audience who does not like being patronised.

Habits and personality

Sherlock defines himself as a “high-functioning sociopath” and Sergeant Donovan looks at him and sees a “lunatic” (S1. Ep.1, “A Study in Pink”). When he appears disguised as a beaten vicar in Irene Adler’s house she tells him that he is just like his disguise: “damaged, delusional and believe in a higher power. In your case, it’s yourself” (S2. Ep.1, “A Scandal in Belgravia”). Victorian Holmes also believed in his higher power, but so did his contemporaries. Contemporary Sherlock’s talent is not appreciated by some. What is more, a great number of people consider him a freak.

The fact that he is described as damaged adds to his humanity because a godlike figure as the Victorian Holmes could not be considered as damaged. He was emotionless thus, flawless. Nevertheless, postmodern Holmes obviously has feelings even though he tries to ignore them. When Moriarty threatens to burn his soul, Sherlock’s response is that he has been informed that he does not possess one. At this the criminal mastermind says: “we both know that’s not quite true” (S1. Ep.3, “The Great Game”). For Victorian Holmes, being emotionally detached seemed quite natural. Conversely, Sherlock seems to struggle with keeping emotions at bay. He continuously reminds himself and others that he has no soul, no friends and that relationships are superfluous, when in fact he does not truly believe it.

At Sherlock’s death stone Watson confesses that sometimes he did not think Sherlock was even human and in fact he once calls him “Spock” (S2. Ep.2, “The Hounds of Baskerville”) and “you machine” (S2. Ep3, “The Reichenbach Fall”). However, Watson’s opinion changes with time. He later describes Holmes as “the best man, and the most human...human being” (S2. Ep3, “The Reichenbach Fall”). Sherlock, on the other hand does not think he is human at all. He describes himself in negative terms and wonders why Watson even considers him to be his best friend:

I am the most unpleasant, rude, ignorant and all-round obnoxious arsehole that anyone could possibly have the misfortune to meet. I am dismissive of the virtuous, unaware of the beautiful, and uncomprehending in the face of the happy.” (S3. Ep. 2, “The Sign of Three”)

Those who are intimidated by his brilliant insight can only see a freak or a psychopath. However, those who see past that, come to esteem him and become his friends even though he is unwilling to let anyone get close to him.

Implied drug user and on-again off-again smoker

Similarly to Doyle's Holmes, Sherlock is a smoker and drug user. The use of drugs is only implied in the series but never explicitly shown. Contrary to Doyle's Watson who was a smoker, BBC's version of the doctor abhors both vices and tries to keep Sherlock away from them. Sherlock uses nicotine patches but not because he wants to quit smoking but because it "helps me think" and also on the grounds that it is "impossible to sustain a smoking habit in London these days. Bad news for brain work" (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink"). He is of course aware of the negative physical consequences smoking provokes. It is implied that Sherlock may be using drugs when Watson finds him in a drug den, Sherlock assures him that he is not using but that he is only undercover for a case. Not surprisingly, Watson does not believe his friend's word for it and takes him to Molly Hooper. When Mary Watson asks her husband why he responds: "Because Sherlock Holmes needs to pee in a jar" (S3. Ep.3, "His Last Vow"). After the test is conducted, Watson wants to know the results but Molly does the unimaginable and slaps Sherlock, angrily asking him: "How dare you throw away the beautiful gifts you were born with? ... And how dare you betray the love of your friends? Say you're sorry!" (S3. Ep.3, "His Last Vow").

Doyle did not present Holmes' substance abuse as a problem but as a means to an end. The detective's problem was boredom and drugs were the cure. Conversely, the Sherlock Cumberbatch gives life to, is not truly an addict but uses drugs occasionally. He uses not so much to put an end to boredom but because he is human, and human beings have vices they cannot control.

View on crime

When a crime is committed, Sherlock is eager to participate in solving it. However, just like the original Holmes, they are in it not for the fame but for the game. Another similarity worth mentioning is the fact that they consider police officers and detectives as utterly inept. Nevertheless, BBC's Sherlock is more straightforward at telling them how ignorant and useless they are. The detective repeatedly humiliates Anderson, member of The Yard's forensic team, telling him: "Anderson, don't talk out loud. You lower the I.Q. of the whole street." (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink"). Doyle's detective knew his intelligence was superior but was never so straightforward in insulting others. On the other hand, contemporary Sherlock proves to be quite short-tempered when it comes to stupidity. As we will see, this point of view on the police is quite different in *Elementary*. Jonny Lee Miller's Sherlock admires the police detectives he works with. In addition, he goes one step further and commences teaching Watson his deductive method.

Similarly to Victorian Sherlock Holmes, *Sherlock's* protagonist gets extremely bored when he does not have a case to work on. He sees crime as a game he cannot wait to play. When he receives word that a crime has been committed he gets ecstatic "Brilliant! Yes! Ah, four serial suicides, and now a note! Oh, it's Christmas! ... We've got ourselves a serial killer. I love those. There's always something to look forward to. (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink"). Mrs. Hudson warns him that it is not "decent" to be overjoyed over a crime but he responds: "Who cares about decent? The game, Mrs. Hudson, is on!" (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink"). Additionally, he qualifies crime as "fun" and "elegant" and Watson has to remind him that "there's a woman lying dead" (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink").

Sergeant Donovan cautions Watson to stay away from Holmes because he is a psychopath and eventually he will get bored with solving crimes and he will commit them. She mentions that Sherlock does not get paid for consulting the police and the only reason he does it is because crime thrills him:

DONOVAN: He's not paid or anything. He likes it. He gets off on it. The weirder the crime, the more he gets off. And you know what? One day just showing up won't be enough. One day we'll be standing round a body and Sherlock Holmes'll be the one that put it there. (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink").

Sherlock goes frantic when he is without a case to occupy his mind which he describes as "like an engine, racing out of control; a rocket tearing itself to pieces trapped on the launch pad." (S2. Ep.2, "The Hounds of the Baskerville"). Holmes himself admits that the only reason he solves crimes is to avoid using drugs: "Your best friend is a sociopath who solves crimes as an alternative to getting high. That's me, by the way" (S3. Ep.3, "His Last Vow").

He may love joining the dots and saving the day, but he does it for the thrill of the chase not because he cares about the victims. Sherlock tells Watson that caring will not help save them, it is distracting and he considers it a mistake, just like other emotions: "This hospital's full of people dying, Doctor. Why don't you go and cry by their bedside and see what good it does them?" (S1. Ep.3, "The Great Game"). Once again there is an example of how Sherlock prevents himself from caring. From his point of view emotions can paralyse a person and this is what Holmes is trying to prevent, being rendered useless as a logician because of feelings. As it will be analysed later one, in the case of *Elementary*, Sherlock's emotional breakdown made him delve into substance abuse.

Socially awkward

Cumberbatch's Sherlock may retain the intellect of the classical Holmes but at the same time we see that he lacks social skills. For instance, when Molly Hopper flirtatiously asks him whether he would like to have a cup of coffee when they finish work, he completely misses the point and responds "Black, two sugars, please. I'll be upstairs." (S1. Ep.1, "A Study in Pink"). He is portrayed as highly intelligent but completely ignorant in some respects. Victorian Holmes is aware of everything surrounding him. However, BBC's Sherlock seems to see only what he chooses to. He is brilliant interpreting facts and putting together clues but does a lousy job at connecting to people.

For these reasons Sherlock is surprised the first time John praises his observations saying that what he does is “amazing” and “extraordinary”. Holmes responds: “That’s not what people normally say”. When John wants to know what people normally say, the detective responds “Piss off!” (S1. Ep.1, “A Study in Pink”). The Victorian Holmes was considered an eminence in his field. His intellect was valued and praised by society but nowadays people sometimes cannot stand a know-it-all.

Friendships

Friendship is an important aspect to Sherlock’s personality because throughout the series people wonder how come he has any friends. For instance, when Sherlock is seen with Watson, people are in disbelief because they really cannot imagine how someone can stand Sherlock. When doctor is introduced as a “colleague”, Sergeant Donovan asks: “A colleague? How do you get a colleague?”. Then she addresses Watson: “You’re not his friend. He doesn’t have friends. So who are you?” (S1. Ep.1, “A Study in Pink”). Not even Mycroft knows how to define his brother’s relationship with Watson so he calls them “pals”. He then adds: “What’s he like to live with? Hellish, I imagine.” (S1. Ep.3, “The Great Game”)

Watson is has surpassed his Victorian condition as narrator. In *Sherlock* he clearly is the detective’s best friend. Sherlock describes the doctor as the “Bravest and kindest and wisest human being” (S3. Ep. 2, “The Sign of Three”) he has ever met. He shows that he values the doctor’s friendship and praises his ability to save lives telling the guest at Watson’s wedding that while he is able to read a crime scene, Watson can understand and relate to human beings:

But a word to the wise: should any of you require the services of either of us, I will solve your murder, but it takes John Watson to save your life. Trust me on that – I should know. He’s saved mine so many times, and in so many ways. (S3. Ep. 2, “The Sign of Three”)

Even if Sherlock insists that he does not have friends, he is very protective of those who surround him. In “A Scandal in Belgravia” (S1. Ep.2) Sherlock beats up a man who broke into the flat and hurt Mrs. Hudson, his landlady. What is more, in “The Reichenbach Fall” (S2. Ep.3), criminal mastermind Moriarty loses interest in Sherlock and wants him dead. To that

end he threatens to kill Watson, Mrs. Hudson and Lestrade if Holmes did not commit suicide. Sherlock was willing to do it in order to save the lives of his friends. Not to mention that in “His Last Vow” (S3. Ep.3) he sacrifices his own freedom by killing Magnussen to stop him from blackmailing Mary Watson with secrets from her past.

So far we have seen that Sherlock is able to recognize the virtues of others but also acknowledge his own flaws. Cumberbatch’s portrayal of Holmes makes viewers see him as a human being, despite the fact that he is highly intelligent and observant. He is no longer the cold, rational and objective Victorian detective but a real person with positive traits but also with flaws and vices.

Childish and Jealous

Sherlock’s relationship with Watson often resembles that of small children. Their conversations are at times endless banter. For instance, when summoned at Buckingham Palace, Sherlock refuses to put on clothes because he does not want to leave his house until he finds out the name of his client. When Watson arrives at the Palace he sees Sherlock covered with a white sheet and asks: “Are you wearing any pants?” (S2. Ep.1, “A Scandal in Belgravia”). Sherlock replies that he does not and both of them burst into laughter. An exasperated Mycroft sternly orders Sherlock to put his trousers on and asks them: “Just once, can you two behave like grown-ups?” but for his dissatisfaction John replies: “We solve crimes, I blog about it and he forgets his pants, so I wouldn’t hold out too much hope” (S2. Ep.1, “A Scandal in Belgravia”).

There are times when Watson needs to handle him and tell him what to do. For instance, when Holmes has to testify against Moriarty, John urges him “don’t try to be clever and please, just keep it simple and brief...’intelligent’, fine; let’s give ‘smart-arse’ a wide berth” (S2. Ep3, “The Reichenbach Fall”). Nevertheless, Sherlock cannot resist the temptation and gets himself thrown into a cell for contempt to the court. The judge asks: “Do you think you could survive for just a few minutes without showing off?” obviously, he cannot. He tells Watson: I can’t just turn it on and off like a tap” (S2. Ep3, “The Reichenbach Fall”). However, the fact is he enjoys showing off.

Another example of infantile behaviour is stealing. In numerous occasions we see that Sherlock “borrows” objects such as John’s mobile phone and his laptop or an ashtray from Buckingham Palace. He has detective Lestrade’s card because he pickpocket’s him “when he’s annoying” (S1. Ep.1, “A Study in Pink”).

Sherlock Holmes proves to be a man of many skills. In “The Empty Hearse” (S3. Ep.1) we see him playing “Operation” with his brother Mycroft while viewers are lured into believing that they are playing chess. Furthermore, we could never imagine the unemotional classical detective organizing a wedding. In “The Sign of Three” (S3. Ep.2) Sherlock is seen helping Mary Morstan plan her wedding and taking care of every single detail such as serviettes which he learns how to fold into different shapes by watching videos on YouTube. He tries to convince Mary that it is a skill required in his line of work.

John Watson’s fiancée, Mary takes on at times the role of the mother. She realizes that Sherlock is terrified of the fact that after the wedding he will lose his best friend and tries to calm him down by telling Watson to find him a case and prove him that their relationship will not be altered “You need to run him, okay? Show him it’s still the good old days” (S3. Ep.2, “The Sign of Three”). To reassure him further, Watson tells him “you know it won’t alter anything, right, me and Mary, getting married? We’ll still be doing all this”. Through this fear of losing his friend, we see another facet of the contemporary detective which makes him different from the original one who was not jealous simply because he did not care.

We continue to follow the detective’s adventures because he has been reinvented. His method may not have changed but his personality certainly has. His flawed human side makes viewers fall in love with the character. Of course, the relationship dynamics he has with Watson but also with other characters such as Molly Hooper, Mrs. Hudson or Mary Morstan, are key to building his personality.

6.2. One step closer to humanity: *Elementary*'s Sherlock Holmes

Elementary, my dear Joan

Much has changed from Victorian times when Watson acted as chronicler for Holmes' adventures. Not to mention that for the most part he was the sleuth's cheerleader, praising the extraordinary qualities of the detective. In *Sherlock* we have seen Watson as the loyal friend, who is occasionally appreciated by the sleuth. Their truly bond which goes one step further from the original.

Conversely, in *Elementary* we see a totally different relationship between the two which is related to the fact that producer Robert Doherty chose to change the gender of the sidekick. While researching for the series, Doherty read an article where the author stated that Holmes had an aversion to women. Not to mention that a female Watson appeals to a wider range of viewers. Those who criticise the choice claim that if Doherty wanted to make a feminist claim he should have casted Lucy Liu as Sherlock Holmes instead.

On the one hand, in *Sherlock* we have seen that John Watson has to handle Sherlock who sometimes acts like a child. Nevertheless, many times Watson himself behaves as childish as his best friend. This infantile conduct on part of both the detective and his friend are seen as male bonding which furthermore emphasizes their relationship as a duo.

On the other hand, in *Elementary*, Joan Watson does much more than just handle Sherlock. She is more than a friend and becomes a mother figure. Because she is hired by Sherlock's father to be Sherlock's live-in sober companion she becomes what Polasek calls a "parental surrogate" (2013: 392). She must be constantly in his company to ensure that he does not use drugs so that means she also follows him to crime scenes. One morning she wakes up and realizes that he has given her the slip by disconnecting all of her alarm clocks. The first thing she does when she sees him is swabbing his mouth and doing a drug test. To further evidentiate Watson's role as the responsible adult, when Sherlock is complaining to Captain Gregson of the New York Police

Department, about the “lurching, inept bureaucracy”, Gregson sees Watson approaching and tells her: “Oh, good, you're here. He's doing his tantrum thing” (S1.Ep.11, “Dirty Laundry”).

At first Sherlock is unwilling to have Watson around so he refers to her as “glorified helper monkey”, “addict-sitter” and “personal valet” (S1.Ep.1, “Pilot”), his “consultant, slash housekeep” (S1.Ep.8, “The Long Fuse”) or even “bodyguard” (S1.Ep.4, “The Rat Race”). Nevertheless, in time he is able to put aside his immaturity and acknowledge the value of having someone like her by his side. When she is no longer his sober companion, Sherlock asks her to stay with him offering to teach her his method:

Stay on permanently. Not as my sober companion, but as my companion. Allow me to continue to teach you. Assist me in my investigations.... See, this is an important decision, and I encourage you to discuss it with others. Explain what you have been to me and what I believe you can be to me. A partner...I am better with you, Watson. I'm sharper, I'm more focused. Difficult to say why, exactly. Perhaps, in time, I'll solve that, as well. (S1.Ep.16, “Details”).

Indeed she makes him a better person, or at least makes him want to be better. When Sherlock almost steals a vial of opiates from a crime scene, he eventually resists the temptation and tells Watson that he did so: “Because I knew how disappointed that you would be in me” (S1.Ep.23/24, The Woman/ Heroine). Watson’s opinion is clearly important to him. What is more, she becomes a moral compass which sometimes guides Sherlock’s decisions. In the works of Doyle, Watson was merely a spectator and storyteller. In *Sherlock*, the doctor becomes the sleuth’s best friend and partner of adventures. They can indulge in childish behaviour and only at times Watson demands restraint. However, in *Elementary*, the stakes are higher. Watson is worried about Sherlock’s well being and the drug abuse problem is not a joke like in *Sherlock* or an escape from boredom like in the original.

Sherlock is not in a higher position because he is no longer all-knowing. In fact, he admits to Watson that he found out about her father’s affair because he found out Googling it. Far from the all knowing Victorian Sherlock, contemporary detectives are not perfect. Just like BBC’s

version who sometimes cannot solve a case, even if he does not like to admit that in public, *Elementary*'s detective admits that "not everything is deducible" (S1.Ep.1, "Pilot").

Additionally, Watson more than once provides insight that helps solve the case. For instance, in "Flight Risk" (S1.Ep.6) Sherlock sees a device and thinks it is a pager but Watson disagrees: "that's not a pager. It's an insulin pump. Your mystery man is a diabetic". Not to mention that by spending time with Sherlock she becomes quite a good detective. Thus, this means that Sherlock's talents are not godly but can be learnt. Sherlock admits that her comments are quite useful: "I may even listen to you again in the future. Not your sobriety twaddle, of course. Just your thoughts on cases" (S1.Ep.3, "Child Predator").

Their relationship evolves and when Watson ceases to be his sober-companion she becomes his partner. Sherlock commences teaching her the deductive method and she proves to be good at it. Sherlock tells her: "Well done, Watson. Your deductive skills are not unworthy of further development". At this she responds: "I think that was a compliment, buried in a double negative, so thanks" (S1.Ep.4, "The Rat Race"). Through this she is offered another chance of helping others without being a doctor. In addition, Sherlock even compliments her in front of her family which does not understand why she wastes her talent as a surgeon by living with recovering addicts:

SHERLOCK: She practices quite a unique specialty, your daughter. She rebuilds lives from the ground up. You can measure her success in careers restored. In my case, criminals caught and in lives saved. (S1.Ep.10, "The Leviathan")

At the end of the season, we become aware of the fact that their relationship is truly special when Sherlock names a new type of rare bee after Watson. He implies that similar to the bee, Watson is special and important to him. She will continue to look after Sherlock but not as a sober companion, but as a partner and is referred to as his "better half" (S1.Ep.15). They are on more equal terms than the previously commented Sherlocks. Joan Watson is not a chronicler like her male Victorian counterpart or a best friend like BBC's Dr. Watson. She is Sherlock's match, a consultant detective in her own right.

Immature and selfish

Similarly to BBC's version, Sherlock is presented as "a teenager on a sugar high" (S1.Ep.4, "The Rat Race") as Watson would put it. He hacks Watson's email and phone and answers text messages for her, even blackmails her into taking him to dinner with her family by saying he is feeling a bit "relapsy" knowing she cannot leave him alone if he mentions the word.

Watson tries to find out what led him to drugs so she tells him she would like to ask something about his past. He responds: "You wait here. I'll go to my room, shut the door. As soon as you're absolutely certain I can't hear you, ask away" (S1.Ep.6, "Flight Risk"). He proves very reluctant to give others an insight to his character. For instance, during his first share at the addiction support group, which he calls "addict festival" (S1.Ep.2, "While You Were Sleeping"), he talks about a mongoose. Furthermore, Sherlock even puts himself in a trance by repeating the word "amygdala" in order to avoid hearing the "sob stories" people shared at the support meeting.

A former therapist of Sherlock describes him as "childish and self-absorbed" (S1.Ep.7, "One Way to Get Off"). Captain Gregson describes him as a guy who "is always gonna need someone. He may be the smartest guy I've ever met in my life but he is also the most self-absorbed" (S1.Ep.22, "Risk Management"). Nevertheless, Sherlock knows he is not perfect but he is also aware of how good he is at what he does. That is why he believes "allowances have to be made" since his work is for "the greater good" (S1.Ep.13, "The Red Team"). Neither Doyle nor the producers of *Sherlock* explicitly mention this fact but *Elementary* Sherlock tells Watson that everyone should accept him as he is, because he is brilliant and they need him. That is why Victorian Sherlock's negative character traits were overlooked. BBC's Sherlock's are excused not only because of Cumberbatch's good looks but also because Sherlock is willing to sacrifice his life and freedom for his friends.

Unstable and flawed: junkie Sherlock

The line between hero and antihero is further blurred when Sherlock is presented not only as childish but also as a recovering addict. If BBC presents a machine-like Sherlock who apparently has no emotions, or at least none he cares to admit, CBS's version is a Sherlock who realized he has feelings when he hit rock bottom and was sent to "junkie jail" (S1.Ep.1, "Pilot").

Sherlock proves he is unstable when, unable to prove a man killed his wife, he asks for Watson's car keys and crashes her vehicle. He admits to Watson that he just could not help himself. A former therapist who worked with him tells Watson: "he does make it difficult to keep one's cool, doesn't he?" (S1.Ep.7, "One Way to Get Off"). Unquestionably, Watson agrees with the last statement. When she sees Sherlock using old scanner devices, which he likes for the "dials and buttons", to listen in on the police radio she ironically says: "You like pushing buttons; I'm stunned" (S1.Ep.6, "Flight Risk"). Even though Sherlock repeatedly implies that she should do housework: "Look at this place. I can't wait for you to tidy it up" (S1.Ep.1, "Pilot") or even makes comments which are extremely misogynistic, such as implying Watson is sullen because she is menstruating. Watson proves to possess an enormous amount of self-control by remaining at his side.

Despite his efforts of pushing her away, Watson is very protective of Sherlock as evidenced when Rhys, Sherlock's former drug supplier appears at the brownstone and is caught smoking marijuana in the bathroom. Watson catches him in fraganti and warns him that he ever imperils Sherlock's rehabilitation she will turn him over to the police:

I'm a sober companion. You're in the home of a recovering addict. You don't do drugs here... Sherlock is my number one priority. So you will not do drugs in his house, you will not talk to him about this, and you will not talk about drugs in his presence. (S1, Ep.15, "A Giant Gun, Filled with Drugs")

However, Rhys disobeys her when he no longer believes that Sherlock is able to find his kidnapped daughter without the boost opiates provide, so he offers the detective drugs. He does so because he thinks Sherlock was a better detective when using: "That's not you, that's not

Sherlock Holmes. This is some ghost of you, some pale imitation. You need your meds.
(S1.Ep.15, “A Giant Gun, Filled with Drugs”)

Irene Adler, the woman whom he loved and who turned out to be his nemesis Moriarty, sees in him a broken man and seems to know why Sherlock is so drawn to narcotics. In her opinion he is in constant pain: “your sensitivities, they make you a great detective, but they also hurt you” (S1.Ep. 23/24, “The Woman/ Heroine”). Sherlock himself says that “heroin users are looking for oblivion; they want the drug to dull their senses” (S1.Ep.4, “The Rat Race”). This implies that Sherlock’s emotions are so heightened that he needed drugs to damp them. To Irene Adler he admits being broken after she was presumed dead. He defines her death as the moment when an occasional hobby turned into a way of life: “I thought the drugs were helping, and they were not. When I couldn't find the man who I thought had killed you, I just, I hit a bottom” (S1.Ep. 23/24, The Woman/ Heroine).

The Sherlock presented in *Elementary* is thus, one who is the opposite of emotionless. He experienced both love and loss through Irene and these feelings broke the wall he had build to stop emotions from surfacing. Watson warned him that not addressing painful issues is not good because “if you ignore them, they become triggers” (S1.Ep7, “One Way to Get Off”), which is what happened to Sherlock that made him become an addict. When he lost Irene, all his emotions emerged and he was unable to tackle them. Watson understands that and says: “You can connect to people. It just frightens you” (S1.Ep.1, “Pilot”). His difficulty to cope with emotions can be the result of an absentee father who “packed me off to boarding school when I was just eight years old” (S1.Ep.3, “Child Predator”). When his father invites him and Watson to dinner, Sherlock is positive he has no intention of actually showing up. He tells Watson: “Dad never shows!” (S1.Ep.6, “Flight Risk”).

Sherlock’s downfall was caused by emotions and that is why he is so unwilling to express them. He believes that love made him weak and he confesses that to Irene/Moriarty: “we both made

the same mistake. We fell in love. It made us stupid”. Thus, it can be concluded that he became an addict not because he was bored, but because he was all of the sudden flooded with emotions he could not control. He tells Irene: “because I care for you, I am also weak” (. (S1.Ep.23/24, The Woman/ Heroine).

Empathy towards victims

Contrary to BBC’s Sherlock, CBS’s version of the detective is far more humane from the point of view of caring for others. Of course he enjoys solving puzzles because it takes his mind off drugs. However, he does not see crimes as games. Sherlock is very much aware of what is at stake and would do anything to prevent the suffering of others.

On the one hand, Victorian Sherlock only cares about the case while *Sherlock*’s consulting detective needs to keep being reminded not to smile at a crime scene. In *Elementary*, on the other hand, Sherlock is presented as compassionate. He is eager to leave the brownstone and help the police but he does not get euphoric at the sound of the word crime. For instance, in the first episode Sherlock is in an apartment investigating the disappearance of a woman. He concludes that she is dead and that her body is in the safe. When the police open the safe and find the woman he says: “Sometimes I hate it when I'm right” (S1.Ep.1, “Pilot”). On more than one occasion viewers realize that not only he actually cares about what happens to others but it also affects him. He sees people as what they are, that is, human beings, not variables in an equation like the previously analysed Sherlocks would.

Moreover, unlike BBC’s Sherlock, he states that hunting down criminals brings him no pleasure: “M... is, without question, the most sinister taker of lives I have ever had the displeasure of pursuing. (S1.Ep.12, “M.”) Not to mention that he despises certain kinds of criminals such as child molesters. When he and Watson go to a prison to interview one and find him presenting signs of aggression he says: “Mr. Garvey I heard the victimizers of children had a rough time in prison. It's really nice to see that it's not just a rumour.” (S1.Ep.20, “Dead Man’s Switch”).

Most importantly is the fact that he is not afraid of admitting one of his theories was wrong if that means helping someone. In “You Do It Yourself” (S1.Ep.9) all evidence suggested that a wife had her husband assassinated. Holmes also found that they were not legally married so even though the woman would not be found guilty she would have been separated from her daughter. In order to prevent that, Sherlock decides to figure out a way to help her.

All this proves that he is a step further down the lane of empathy. He is not only attracted to puzzle-solving but he genuinely wants to help. These characteristics differentiate him even further from the classical detective and even from BBC’s Sherlock who sometimes shows that he has feelings but does not want to admit them yet. Doyle’s hero was a superhuman who committed no mistakes. His reasoning and scientific method were described as truly flawless. BBC’s sleuth was not always successful but refused to admit his failures. Even if he talks about human error, he is unable to perceive himself as human.

The excuse of boredom

Sherlock refers to boredom as “far more dangerous to my health than any fever” (S1.Ep.9, “You Do It Yourself”). However, it is seldom mentioned or showed in *Elementary*. It is certainly not the cause of his addiction to drugs. He falls into addiction not due to ennui but because he is led into believing that M. murdered the woman he loved. His boredom is not a main point in building his personality and while he does talk about it, viewers do not take him seriously since he always has an ulterior motive for invoking it.

For instance, Watson wants to help a friend who is also an addict and tells him to come to a clinic to get help. Sherlock realizes the man will not show up and sits with Watson while she is waiting saying that he is only there because he has nothing else to do: “there's nothing more hazardous to my health than boredom” (S1.Ep.9, “You Do It Yourself”). Clearly Sherlock just wants to be there for Watson since he is certain she will be let down and does not want her to be alone when it happens. Another moment in which Sherlock invokes boredom to explain his behaviour is when he breaks out of the rehab facility he was in, the same day he was being

released. He tells Watson he did that because he was bored but in fact he knew that, as his sober companion, she was going to wait for him outside. He only left off to spite her and maybe even demonstrate he will be a difficult client whom she could not control. However, his ulterior motive may have been to scare her into quitting as his sober companion.

Sherlock is never seen on the verge of a breakdown because he does not have a case. There is never the feeling of urgency concerning lack of puzzles to solve as the one we saw in *Sherlock*. BBC's Sherlock views cases as games. In *Elementary*, Moriarty tells Sherlock that where he sees puzzles, she sees games. This would imply that he is quite different from both Moriarty and *Sherlock*. He is not addicted to puzzle-solving nor views his occupation as a cure for monotony. From his point of view, being a consulting detective is just part of post-addiction therapy.

Conclusion

The redefining of Holmes' personality in the modern-day adaptations has ensured the character's longevity and contributed to his popularity. The main aspects that define his character have not been altered in adaptations but given another point of view. For instance, Doyle's Holmes is quite against any type of feelings which may interfere with his judgement. This is translated in *Elementary* through Sherlock's misogynistic comments towards Watson. Another example of this shift in point of view is the sleuth's use of drugs which was presented by Doyle as the result of boredom. *Elementary's* Sherlock also used drugs; however, he lost control because he thought Irene, the love of his life, was murdered.

Despite this reshaping of the original, the main signature traits of the Great Detective remain embedded in the two contemporary adaptations. Both TV series preserved aspects such as: the sleuth's intellectual superiority, his aversion to women and sentiment (especially in *Sherlock*), the use of drugs (more present in *Elementary*), the police's dependability on his skills and the fact that he does not seek public recognition for his work.

Nevertheless, there are other aspects which are not similar to the traits of the original consulting detective. In this respect, contemporary Sherlocks are presented as more childish and instable, even on the verge of losing control as exemplified by *Elementary's* and *Sherlock's* detectives. Jonny Lee Miller's character always throws temper tantrums while BBC's detective wants so badly to prove he is right that he often plays with people's lives including his own. They need an adult who would temper that volatility and contemporary Watsons play that part. *Elementary's* Joan Watson even becomes a mother figure for Sherlock, making sure that he eats enough and has enough sleep since he forgets to do both when engaged in solving a case. Modern-day Watsons gain more protagonism in the TV series. *Sherlock's* Dr. John Watson is more than just the chronicler of Sherlock's adventures like the original one. He is Sherlock's best friend. *Elementary's* Watson actually becomes Sherlock's partner and a consulting detective herself. This aspect proves that Sherlock is no longer portrayed as the autonomous

superhuman but as a human being. Team work is important especially in *Elementary* where Joan Watson makes useful contributions to solving cases.

The three characters (Doyle's original detective, BBC's and CBS's versions) can be viewed as a single person in different stages of their life. Sherlock starts off being the unemotional consulting detective with a brilliant intellect. Then, *Sherlock's* Holmes experiences emotions which he considers a weakness. Because he does not know how to handle them he is perceived as socially awkward. In the end, *Elementary's* Sherlock can be viewed as a broken person who, for having allowed himself to be weak and fall in love, experiences a tragic loss from which he cannot recover on his own. In *Elementary*, Sherlock's story is one of survival, of overcoming an addiction. It proves that no matter how intelligent one is, we are not superhumans. If you keep blocking emotions they will overcome you one day. *Elementary's* Sherlock is learning how to deal with those emotions.

The producers of the series had not only the task of bringing Holmes into the 21st century but also of adapting their respective shows to the British (*Sherlock*) and American (*Elementary*) public. On the one hand, BBC's version is more loyal to the classic since the series is produced for national broadcasting and considered to be quality television. Since it is more likely that the audience is familiar with Conan Doyle's works, the mini-series provides the pleasure of recognition. For instance, each episode is based on and makes reference to one or more of Doyle's works. The titles of the episodes are quite telling on their own, such as: "A Study in Pink" which is named after Doyle's first novel featuring the detective, *A Study in Scarlet*.

On the other hand, CBS is not a public network like BBC, but a private one which is not obliged to satisfy the needs of a broad audience but a niche one. They only have to serve the public who can afford their license fees. Additionally, private broadcasters have freer reign to be inventive since their main goal is profit. This may be the reason for which they introduced a female Dr. Watson whose character appeals to both men and women. The contemporary British audience is

more unlikely to approve of a female Watson since it would break with the canon and the traditional view on the detective and his sidekick.

With each adaptation, the concept of Holmes as an out-of-control genius who needs to be managed grows stronger. In *Sherlock* we see the blurring of the line between hero and antihero in a character which is thrilled by crime and is considered by others as a psychopath. Not to mention that at some point he is accused of being a fraud and of committing murders to place himself in the center of attention as the one who solved them. Furthermore, he is presented as an arrogant unmanageable child who cannot admit when he is wrong. Contemporary Sherlocks are presented as flawed and in need of a grown-up figure to manage them. *Elementary*'s Sherlock is not presented as a sociopath but a person driven to solve puzzles. He has self-destructed and is now picking up the pieces. Thus, the series depicts an antihero who is attempting to come to terms with his inner demons. Unlike BBC's arrogant Sherlock who never misses a chance to insult inept police officers, CBS's version is much more emotional. The Sherlock Jonny Lee Miller gives life to is able to empathise with victims, loses his temper in a second but is also able to offer sincere apologies when he commits a mistake. *Sherlock*'s detective has not hit rock bottom yet and that is why he avoids tackling his own emotions. He is now discovering that he is not in fact a machine while the character in *Elementary* has already learnt that and accepts his emotions. The tantrums he throws are due to the fact that he has not learnt to control them yet.

Even if re-shaped, Holmes' main function also pervades in his contemporary counterparts. It may not have been Doyle's intention but Holmes assumed the role of reassuring the Victorian society that social order can be restored through the intervention of science. Their crime generated anxieties were put at ease by their view that out there may be someone like Holmes to fight against crime. Nowadays, as a society we are not so far from Victorian anxieties ourselves. The fact that Holmes is becoming so popular may be due to the fact that we live in a post 9/11 world and we also need to be reassured that there is someone out there protecting society from the menace of terrorism. Hence the surge of TV series such as *Sherlock* and *Elementary* but also

of: *Intelligence*, *CSI*, *NCIS*, *Criminal Minds* or *The Mentalist*. Nevertheless, contemporary Sherlocks not only fight against threats but also need to struggle with their inner demons.

The adaptations suit different types of audiences and at the same time remain true to the origins.

Hero or antihero, Sherlock Holmes will unquestionably outlive us all due to his constant appeal to the public through the character's perpetual reinvention.

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