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A Study in Sherlock Holmes and Adaptability: Looking For Clues as to What Makes Watson, Adler, and Moriarty Endure

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By

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"I am weary of [both of their] names"

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Introduction

The Puzzle of Why Sherlock Holmes is Still Around Today Despite the Best Efforts of His Creator

"I fear that Mr. Sherlock Holmes may become like one of those popular tenors who, having outlived their time, are still tempted to make repeated farewell bows to their indulgent audiences"
(Doyle "Preface" to "The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes")

Sherlock Holmes: No doubt you have heard of him. The now-famous detective first appeared on the scene in 1887 in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel, *A Study in Scarlet*. Following that debut another Holmes novel was published, titled *The Sign of Four*. While both received moderate attention, Sherlock Holmes' popularity skyrocketed with the publication of Doyle's stories in *The Strand Magazine*. Starting in July of 1891, *The Strand* published the first in a series of short stories, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, to great acclaim:

> "A Scandal in Bohemia" appeared in July's *Strand*, and the public's reaction was all that the author, editor, and delighted publisher could hope for. Ingeniously, the story's titillating details played to the public fascination with royal scandals, sparking widespread speculation as to the real identities of the characters. At a stroke, Conan Doyle became one of the most famous writers in Britain. (Doyle, *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* (*ALiL*) 293)

We learn from *The Strand*'s website that in his autobiography, Doyle admitted he had specifically written the short stories in order to get himself established in *The Strand* (www.strandmag.com). One of the major advantages of printing stories in such a magazine

was the fact that novels, such as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, could be serialized. Since readers received only parts of the story with each issue of the magazine, the suspense and excitement about what would happen next guaranteed even more readership. Even before Holmes encountered the hound in 1901, the readers and fans of the stories proved just how much they cared about the character. In 1893, Doyle wrote to his mother, Mary Doyle and said, "I am in the middle of the last Holmes story, after which the gentleman vanishes, never to reappear. I am weary of his name[1]" (Doyle *ALiL* 319). Doyle was referring to writing "The Final Problem", a story which ends with Sherlock Holmes and his arch nemesis Moriarty apparently going over the Reichenbach Falls to a watery grave together. At this time, Doyle had grown sick of only writing detective stories and planned to retire Holmes, in a very permanent way. The killing off of the great detective seemed not at all dramatic for Doyle who supposedly "scribbled 'Killed Holmes' laconically in his notebook" (Doyle *ALiL* 324). For fans, it was a much more devastating event. Rumor has it that readers wore black armbands to signify their mourning for the fictional detective. Eventually, something[2] got to Doyle and he resurrected the detective for more stories and two more novels. One of the novels is arguably the most famous, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

Perhaps this devotion of fans and readers helps us understand why we have seen so many adaptations of the consulting detective through the years. One of the most notable incarnations of Holmes was Basil Rathbone, who voiced the detective, with Nigel Bruce as Dr. Watson on "The New Adventures of Sherlock Holmes" radio program, during the early 1940s. This pairing also appeared as Holmes and Watson onscreen in a series of fourteen films, starting with *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Sherlock Holmes has also been a

[1] Now that acknowledgement makes sense, does it not?
[2] Be it pressure from the fans or the promise of more money from the publishers.

recurring character on television. Among the most famous of these portrayals is that of Jeremy Brett. in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* on Granada Television from 1984 to 1994, with Watson played by David Burke and, eventually, Edward Hardwicke. This series covered all of the Holmes stories except eighteen, and those were omitted only because Brett suffered a heart attack in 1995. Since these adaptations, which are pretty faithful to Doyle's original stories, audiences have seen Holmes transported into new times and places. In 1999, for example, viewers were introduced to *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century*. This was an animated series that saw Holmes brought back to fighting form through cellular rejuvenation. For the purposes of this project, however, the main focus will be on two of the most recent television adaptations of Doyle's canon.

In July of 2010, the BBC premiered the first episode of *Sherlock*, titled "A Study in Pink". This series was created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, and features a Sherlock Holmes who lives in London in the twenty-first century. Benedict Cumberbatch stars as Sherlock while Martin Freeman is featured as John Watson. A couple of years later, CBS introduced its response to the ever-present popularity of Holmes. *Elementary* premiered on September 27, 2012 and again had Sherlock and Watson in the present day, but this time they were located in New York. This series was created by Robert Doherty and featured a major change to the original canon: a female Watson played by Lucy Liu to work opposite Johnny Lee Miller's Sherlock. The popularity of these series – *Sherlock* has won several BAFTA[3] awards[4] and *Elementary* has been nominated for People's Choice Awards[5]

[3] British Academy of Film and Television Awards.
[4] *Sherlock* won Best Drama Series in 2011, Martin Freeman won Best Supporting Actor in 2011
[5] Nominated for Favorite New TV Drama in 2012

and Primetime Emmy Awards[6]- demonstrates to us how engagingly adaptable Sherlock Holmes is to new settings. But *why* does this character endure? More importantly, why does he endure in such a way that makes the stories of his adventures so conducive to updating? The answer to these questions seems to lie in the fact that when Doyle created Sherlock Holmes, he also created a new and timeless kind of hero.

Thirty years before *A Study in Scarlet* was published, Thomas Hughes wrote a book entitled *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857). The titular character represented a very typical kind of Victorian hero. When Tom Brown goes off to school, there is a hope for what he will grow up to be: "If he'll only turn out a brave, helpful, truth-telling Englishman, and a gentleman, and a Christian, that's all I want" (Hughes 74). This focus on piety and honor is very characteristic of the Victorian hero. But there is another focus in this story, and that is on physical prowess. The boys at Rugby – Tom's school – attend to bettering their minds *and* their bodies so that they can go on to become strong Christian men when they grow up. Many of Tom's classmates eventually join the army and within Hughes' novel, they all compete in cricket matches. This novel and several others of the time created a term known as "muscular Christianity." This is defined as "a Christian life of brave and cheerful physical activity." It takes the idea of a pious hero and adds a physical element most likely geared specifically towards young men. Before Doyle's Holmes appeared on the literary scene, we saw a precedent of heroes with religious tendencies as well as physical prowess and strong ideas of what masculinity is.

Enter Holmes. Doyle's creation does not share many qualities with the previously established heroic figure. First of all, he never out and out declares himself a religious man.

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[6] Nominated for Main title Design and Theme Music in 2013

Occasionally he makes passing reference to religion, such as in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* when he says, "In a modest way I have combated evil, but to take on the Father of Evil himself would, perhaps, be too ambitious a task" (Doyle *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Volume I (CSH)* 681). This makes it seem as though Holmes believes in something such as the Devil, but in reality he is most likely playing along with his client who is only thinking only of supernatural possibilities for the strange happenings[7] on the moor. Christianity is not a part of who Holmes is; he does not fulfill the pious requirement found in many literary heroes who came before him.

Holmes also distinguishes himself in that he is not aspiring to some higher goal. We do not watch him grow from a rowdy young boy to a refined young man, nor do we see a man seeking to achieve a higher rank. Holmes, as far as we know, probably comes from a fairly well-off family; he is highly educated and we learn that his brother holds a position in the British government. But Holmes seems to have no aspirations to become Sir Sherlock Holmes or to amass any great wealth. Over the course of the canon, he mainly lives in a flat on Baker Street and requires a flat mate to help him pay for it. Similarly, he does not seek glory when he does what he does: solve cases. Whenever Watson writes about their taking on cases that deal with national security or the royal family, those details are glossed over. In fact, Holmes even meets Queen Victoria herself at one point but she is only included in the story as "a certain gracious lady" (Doyle *CSH* 931). Holmes works as a consulting detective and usually helps the police when they are at their wits end, which is quite often. Even when he lends a hand, however, he does not take credit for what he has done. At the

[7] Footprints and strange sounds that seem to point to a gigantic hound.

end of *The Sign of Four*, Watson expresses his disappointment that Holmes seems to have done all of the work for none of the rewards:

> The division seems rather unfair. You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets the credit, pray what remains for you? (Doyle *CSH* 158)

Holmes responds, "for me, there still remains the cocaine bottle" (Doyle *CSH* 158). Holmes is a drug addict, which further sets him apart from the typical hero. After all, you never caught Tom Brown going to his snuffbox when boredom set in. Thus far we have a man who has no specific ties to any divine being, a man who eschews glory or fame or recognition, and a man who frequently uses drugs. But this does not mean Holmes is *not* a hero; he is just a new kind of hero. He is an intellectual hero, not a physical warrior and not a pious and determined go-getter. Holmes demonstrates his heroism through his intelligence. He solves cases by thinking things through logically and clearly. He observes what others, mainly Watson and the police, do not. That kind of heroism lends itself to being adapted and re-imagined in any era.

In addition to differing from the traditional early Victorian hero, Holmes also represents a seemingly updated version of another Victorian hero. Philosopher Thomas Carlyle endeavored to define this hero in his book *On Heroes, Hero-Worship & the Heroic in History* (1841). He writes:

> They were the leaders of men, these great ones, the modelers, patterns, and in a wide sense creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwell in the Great Men sent to the world…(Carlyle 3)

"Great Men" and "heroes" for Carlyle are men who, through their massive impact, essentially create the world in which others live. They grace the world with their presence and the world is better for their contributions. Throughout the book, Carlyle identifies as heroes political leaders such as Cromwell and Napoleon as, religious leaders such as Mahomet, and Gods such as Odin. The Carlylian hero is identified as such by the mark he makes on the world. And, in his own quiet way, Holmes does change the world. The big difference, however, is that Carlyle's "Great Man" is simply the top of the pyramid. He is the man who comes up with the great ideas and then other people make them a reality. For Carlyle, there is the "Great Man" - and then everyone else. As we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter One, Holmes does not fit this idea of the "Great Man". He is not alone. In fact, he not even alone in his status as a "Great Man", John Watson seems to be up there as well.

So, we begin to see why it is that Holmes endures. He is an appealingly adaptable kind of hero – the kind that uses his mind and is not defined by his use of period-specific tools. He also is not tethered to period standards, either of the traditional Victorian hero, or the Carlylian figure. This allows him to move more comfortably in non-Victorian settings.

Though Holmes represents a new kind of hero, he clearly is not the only character to survive from the Victorian era. Vampires, for example, are a hot commodity within today's popular culture. With the publication of Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series and the popularity of vampire television shows such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *The Vampire Diaries*, the bloodsucking fiends seem to be everywhere. But one name stands out above others: Dracula. Created by Bram Stoker in 1897, the Count travels from Transylvania to England in the hopes of finding blood and spreading vampirism. Jonathan Harker, Abraham

Van Helsing, and Mina Harker attempt to destroy him before he succeeds. With a title character who can literally survive forever, barring a staking or burning, it seems highly likely that Dracula could be updated to fit into any setting. If we look at recent popular film adaptations, however, this is not the case. In 2004, Hugh Jackman took on the title role in the film *Van Helsing*. This film shows the vampire hunter tracking down and killing Count Dracula - in the late nineteenth century, just like Stoker's novel. In 2014, a film was released called *Dracula Untold*, which creates an origin story for the character of Dracula beginning in the Middle Ages. Towards the end of the film, the characters enter the present day, but most of the action takes place long ago. So we see a definite tendency to place stories about Dracula in the past. The same applies to a figure such as Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. There have been many film adaptations of *Jane Eyre* but they are never modernized or relocated to the states. Holmes seems to be the only figure to be constantly adapted and moved into new locations.

This seems to be because Holmes is not a product of his time in the same way as Dracula or Jane Eyre. Nowadays, there is a greater skepticism about something like vampires so it less believable that a group of doctors would endeavor to hunt one. Also today, there is much greater mobility for a woman, and someone like Jane Eyre would have career options other than teacher or governess. And Mr. Rochester? He could simply divorce his insane wife rather than locking her in an attic. But Holmes is different than all this. The essential qualities that define his character and the appeal of his stories are not specific to the Victorian era. What makes Holmes Holmes is his intellect, and intellect is always present and important in society. The information and the way he discovers it may change with the times, but his core methodology does not. *Sherlock*'s detective uses a smart

phone and the Internet to track down clues where Doyle's original creation used a magnifying glass and strategically placed ads in the paper. But Holmes' use of logic and observation are as useful now as they were then, just employing different secondary tools.. And the stories themselves are also completely uproot-able. Crime will always be present, no matter where the detective is located. Holmes has fewer specific ties to the time in which he was created, so his accidental characteristics can be more fluid. All of this makes it easy for us to re-imagine him in the present day or in another location.

Of course, Holmes is not the only one from Doyle's stories to endure. John Watson, Irene Adler, and Moriarty all are figures that we see time and again in adaptations of Doyle's original canon. What makes these three characters so important and adaptable that they can consistently exist alongside the famed detective? Similar to Holmes, they all seem to represent new ways of looking at existing heroic tropes – the sidekick, the woman, and the villain - as well as being characters that exist outside of their time.

First, we have Doctor John Watson. To the casual observer, Doctor Watson appears to be Sherlock Holmes' sidekick. On the surface, he seems never to be to be as smart as Holmes, or on the same level as the detective in any sense. But just as Holmes is a new kind of hero, Watson is much more than he appears. As we will explore in Chapter One, Doctor John H. Watson is a hero in his own right. He is no one's sidekick and he proves himself to be on a level playing field with Holmes time and again. Within the modern world of the BBC's *Sherlock*, we see the addition of the potential for a romantic relationship between the two men, but once again John is not even close to a sidekick. In that particular incarnation, John and Sherlock are not only equals: they are men who complete one another. Being together makes each of them a better man and we see the humanization of Sherlock even as

we see the saving of John. CBS's *Elementary* throws us for a loop with a female Watson. Yet, she too is neither inferior nor a traditional sidekick to Sherlock. In the case of that particular show, the dynamic between the two characters takes on a pedagogical tone with Sherlock teaching Watson to follow in his footsteps and become a detective in her own right. Doyle's Watson also shows his adaptability by being a man freshly home from the war, a man with no familial ties or societal ties to keep him grounded in Victorian England. This quality is reflected in *Sherlock*'s Watson, likewise an unattached veteran at the start of the series, and in *Elementary*'s Joan Watson, who finds herself somewhat adrift after leaving her medical practice.

The next trope is that of the woman. Usually in adventure stories, we see female characters either as the love interest of the hero or as the damsel in distress figure for the hero to save. Irene Adler is neither of these things – or both of them *and* more. She is described as a beautiful woman but there is absolutely no question of her becoming a trophy wife for Sherlock Holmes. Similarly, she is not the one to come asking for the detective's help; instead, she is the reason a royal figure comes to Holmes and Watson. Though no specific crime is ever committed in her story, "A Scandal in Bohemia", Irene is most definitely the adversary of the tale - and she outwits Holmes. Again we see the addition of a sexual component when watching *Sherlock*. This incarnation of Irene is a dominatrix who uses her sexuality to try and manipulate everyone around her. The episode, "A Scandal in Belgravia" has her fluctuating between being all types of women. She is at times the damsel in distress, at times the flirtation partner, and at times the intellectual equal. On *Elementary*, we get an Irene who is closest to this trope of the woman as love interest. She is the love of that Sherlock's life, a woman whom he supposes to be

dead; her supposed death, however, is crucial in the shaping of Sherlock as a figure. Not only that, but she defies the trope in her own way by also being Sherlock's greatest nemesis, Moriarty. Doyle's original figure represents a new kind of woman, an adventuress, who does not have a specific place carved out in society. Thus, subsequent adaptations see Adler pushing boundaries and engaging in social taboos, making her a new kind of woman even today.

Finally, there is the villain.. One thing we have come to expect from any incarnation of a villain is that they will clearly distinguish themselves from the hero. They are the (inferior) evil and the hero is the (superior) good. Jane Eyre had her wicked aunt and Tom Brown had the school bully, Flashman. But once again, Doyle's creations defy this heroic trope. In the original canon, Moriarty acts as a kind of "double" for Holmes while also representing the kind of man Holmes could easily be. On *Sherlock* the similarities between Sherlock and Moriarty are much more acknowledged and clear; and, an already darker Sherlock means that his connections to the master criminal are even more apparent. *Elementary* may have a female Moriarty but she mirrors Sherlock every bit as much. All incarnations of Moriarty are uncomfortably similar to the character of Sherlock Holmes. And, like Holmes, Doyle's Moriarty is a man who does not seek glory and whose criminal deeds are not confined to one particular location or time.

We have seen many adaptations of Doyle's characters since he created them and we will most likely see many more. What separates Sherlock Holmes from the other literary creations of his time is that he is a modern man, in any age. He is a man who looks to the future and establishes a new precedent for a kind of hero – an intellectual hero. The fact that he is not merely a product of the Victorian era means that we can move him around

and see how his crime-solving methods would work under all kinds of circumstances. But wherever we bring Sherlock Holmes, it is almost certain that John, Irene, and Moriarty will follow. They, too, represent new ways of looking at existing heroic tropes. Not only that, but they are people without ties, people who would not be missed if they were to be plucked out of the 1800s and placed down within the twenty-first century.

Chapter One

The Case of the Sidekick:
In Which John Watson Proves to be Holmes' Perfect Match and a Hero in His Own Right

"Explain what you have been to me and what I believe you can be to me. Partner."
(*Elementary* "Details")

In "The short story from Poe to Chesterton[8]," Martin A. Kayman mentions the success of various so-called "scientific detectives" in fiction. He notes the success of one detective is far above the others: Sherlock Holmes. Kayman wonders what makes Holmes so much more enduring and popular than other figures of his genre. The answer he arrives at is Doctor John H. Watson. He writes that, "we are cushioned from potentially alienating characteristics by Watson, who mediates our attitudes to the hero" (Kayman 49). Kayman makes an excellent point: to get anywhere close to Sherlock Holmes, people must go through Watson. This is found in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, where Watson is the narrator. It is found in the BBC's *Sherlock*, where Watson is the only friend the consulting detective really has, and the one person who makes him human. It is even found in CBS's *Elementary*, where a female Watson proves to be the best student Sherlock Holmes could ask for. Over and over again this relationship between Holmes and Watson is discussed or re-imagined. Considering the fact that the famous detective is not known for being a "people person," it is surprising that he is able to maintain a relationship with someone like Watson. The reason behind the endurance of this relationship comes from the fact that,

[8] Found in *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*

ultimately, the two figures are true partners. Here, the word "partner" is used to describe two people who not only bring their own good qualities to the table but who also bring out the best qualities in their accomplice. This concept of partnership is evident within Doyle's canon. There are, however, other ways to describe the relationship between these two men. Throughout the canon and subsequent adaptations, readers and viewers find terms such as "hero and sidekick", "lovers", and "sober companion" used to refer to the pairing. Regardless of the terminology, two things remain absolutely clear: Watson is no sidekick and Doyle's original character is recognizable in modern adaptation. The first is because Watson is clearly on Holmes' level and the second is because the core qualities of Watson are always found.

Doyle's Canon[9] - "Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes"[10]

Just as the Fates intervened in the lives of heroes in the ancient Greek stories, the case could be made that similar entities brought Sherlock Holmes and John Watson together in Doyle's first novel *A Study in Scarlet* (1887). Having recently returned from battle "with [his] health irretrievably ruined" (Doyle *The Complete Sherlock Holmes Volume I (CSH)* 15), Watson encounters an old medical school acquaintance, Stamford. Upon learning that Watson is searching for cheap lodgings and a flat mate, Stamford responds, "That's a strange thing. You are the second man to-day that has used that expression to me" (Doyle *CSH* 16). When Watson asks after the identity of the first, the wheels are set in

[9] When dealing with Doyle's canon, it is important to remember that a large number of articles are written by so-called "Sherlockians" who present a skewed and not often verifiable viewpoint.
[10] *A Study in Scarlet*

motion for Holmes and Watson to meet. Thus, the two men are brought together, seemingly by some manipulative force, as if the two were *meant* to become partners.

From the moment they meet, it seems improbable that the two men will work out as flat mates. When Watson and Stamford first enter the lab to meet Sherlock Holmes, the man in question has just completed a chemical discovery.

> At the sound of our steps he glanced round and sprang to his feet with a cry of pleasure. "I've found it! I've found it," he shouted to my companion, running towards us with a test-tube in his hand. "I have found a re-agent which is precipitated by hæmoglobin, and by nothing else." Had he discovered a gold mine, greater delight could not have shown upon his features. (Doyle *CSH* 17)

This first meeting between Holmes and Watson begins with the former showing immense delight at his new discovery. What is truly interesting is that this outburst is not taken badly by Watson, who had recently said, "If I am to lodge with anyone, I should prefer a man of studious and quiet habits. I am not strong enough yet to stand much noise or excitement" (Doyle *CSH* 16-17). Holmes may have studious habits but he is not lacking in excitement, and yet this does not deter John. From the beginning, these men seem to be at odds with one another. Watson is searching for a quiet, easy person with whom to live, and Holmes is ready to jump for joy at the smallest scientific discovery. It is almost as if Watson understands that this other man's company will be beneficial to him, and as such, he is willing to overlook his excitable nature.

Before the narrative *A Study in Scarlet*, even begins, the reader knows something about the narrator, John H. Watson. In a practice seen during the Victorian era[11], Sir Arthur

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[11] For example, H. Rider Haggard's *She*.

Conan Doyle chose to present his stories about Sherlock Holmes as factual writings, in particular, as the transcripts of the consulting detective's partner in crime(solving). In the case of this premier novel, the heading reads, "Being a reprint from the reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D., Late of the army medical department" (Doyle *CSH* 15). After graduating with his medical degree, Watson enlists in the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers. It is not long before he finds himself outside of his home country, in a war zone. He tells the reader: "On landing in Bombay, I learned that my corps had advanced through the passes, and was already deep in the enemy's country. I followed, however, with many other officers who were in the same situation as myself, and succeeded in reaching Candahar in safety, where I found my regiment, and at once entered upon my new duties" (Doyle *CSH* 15). Watson was not only part of the army, but he also showed bravery by going through dangerous territory to reach his troops. His job is so important that it precedes the actual narrative, taking up the first page.

Watson's medical expertise is a quality found in most adaptations of the character. In the canon, his medical abilities prove useful throughout the stories, as he is often called upon to examine suspects, clients, and the bodies at crime scenes. In *A Study in Scarlet*, he even diagnoses the murderer with an aortic aneurism[12]. In *The Sign of Four*, Watson's profession proves particularly useful to Holmes. When left alone with the body of Bartholomew Sholto Holmes says to Watson, "just put [your] hand here on this poor fellow's arm, and here on his leg". Watson observes the hardness of the muscles, leading him to conclude that the man was killed with "some powerful vegetable alkaloid. Some strychnine-like substance which would produce tetanus" (Doyle *CSH* 112-113). Now, as we

[12] To Jefferson Hope: "'Why,' I cried, 'you have an aortic aneurism!'" (Doyle *CSH* 77)

had learned in *A Study in Scarlet,* Holmes is a chemist, and probably already knew about the alkaloid; but, getting a second opinion from a professional allows Holmes to be even more sure, and also, gives him a chance to include Watson in the detecting business.

So we understand the importance of his medical career; but why does Watson have to be an *army* doctor? Why can he not just be a county doctor? He cannot be a county doctor because he would have too many ties. When Watson is sent back to England to recuperate, he finds himself alone and without a purpose. He writes, "I had neither kith nor kin in England…Under such circumstances I naturally gravitated to London, the great cesspool into which all loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained" (Doyle *CSH* 15). Watson is a stranger in his own land, and the injury and fever that leave him unable to continue in service further distance him from the man he once was. Nowadays, he most likely would be diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Here, however, he just becomes a "lounger and idler" – a man who used to be in the thick of the battle but who must adjust to living a life of quiet relaxation. His reference to his time living at a hotel provides further insight into how this change makes Watson feel, describing it as "leading a comfortless, meaningless existence" (Doyle *CSH* 15-16). Distanced from people and from his former self, it makes sense for such a man to jump at the opportunity to engage with someone as intriguing as Holmes, even if he barely knows him. Watson's medical profession means he brings something important to his partnership with Holmes. The fact that he is an army doctor without ties makes him utterly adaptable to new setting.

Although Watson is without roots or ties to society, he does reflect some characteristic qualities of the era; as a professional, middle-class, and physically fit man, he seems to be the typical Victorian male. In her essay "The Watson Effect: Civilizing the

Sociopath," April Toadvine further explores the traits that make Watson appear to be a conventional Victorian man. First, she mentions his sense of morality: "although he was never a detective, he was certainly important because he represented the prevailing late-Victorian morality of the society in which he and Holmes lived (Toadvine 48). Watson's morality is more of what he brings to the table; he may not be a brilliant detective, but his sense of right and wrong make him important to the partnership. His physical prowess and bravery in battle also are qualities valued by Victorian society. Toadvine explains, "At the time, a growing emphasis on athleticism, especially for young middle-class men, meant that men were expected to be physical, athletic, and certainly courageous in the face of physical danger" (Toadvine 49-50). Finally, the way he is referenced – by his last name and title – indicates that he is meant to showcase middle-class Victorian behaviors (Toadvine 52). While all of these qualities seem to add up to a man who represents his time, they are inherent, internal and *transportable* qualities. Without any ties to the world around him and with his defining characteristics being largely internal, Watson can be a brave and good man in any time or place.

Just because Holmes and Watson are not figures necessarily defined by their setting, does not mean that Doyle's canon is completely without aspects that highlight Victorian society. One such aspect is the fact it makes so much sense for these two men to live together. While in today's world it might seem logical to assume two men living together are gay[13], it was not nearly as uncommon in Holmes and Watson's day. In her book, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick introduces the idea of "homosociality". She says that, "It is a word occasionally used in

[13] Something the BBC series *Sherlock* greatly touches on.

history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex." However, she is quick to add that, "it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with 'homosexual', and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from 'homosexual'" (Sedgwick 1). The idea of "homosociality" just has to do with people of the same sex sharing a bond. Holmes and Watson are in a homosocial relationship because there is no obvious romantic aspect to make it homosexual. So their living together did not necessarily mean they were a couple at that time. In her thesis for Bridgewater State University, Rebecca McLaughlin explores the changing nature of male domesticity in the Victorian era. She writes, "as the empire expanded and technology advanced, the home became less important, marriage less vital to a man's identity, and a new emphasis on the importance of homo-social bonds arose," (McLaughlin 10). Marriage became less of a given for men as the empire grew, but why? Part of the reason for this change perhaps had to do with the fact that, with a growing empire, the concept of "home" was not nearly as concrete as it had previously been. People would travel to the colonies in order to make names for themselves. Those who were of lower status in England would be of high-class in the countries where they were the white imperialists colonizing the country. Other people, men specifically, found themselves in strange places fighting wars, like Watson did. When people like this returned to the motherland, their place in society was in flux. With the idea of home changing all around them, many Victorian men found themselves not concerned with marriage and domesticity. What became important were the bonds men formed with each other.

These bonds helped men further themselves professionally and helped them to better other men in society. In his book *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class*

Home in Victorian England, John Tosh writes about this trend of, what he calls a "flight from domesticity":

> Among the professional and business classes who had lived by the code of domesticity for two generations or more, there was evidence of growing restlessness, amounting in some instances to outright rejection of marriage…For them, domesticity no longer represented a fresh vision of comfort and reassurance, but a straitjacket…its main drawback was the check it imposed on intimate relations between men. (Tosh 172)

Perhaps this "restlessness" stemmed from a male desire for adventure out in the empire. With a wife and family at home, there were tethers that would impede the exploring of a growing world. However, just because Holmes and Watson seem to fit this mold of the men fleeing domesticity, it must be remembered that Watson *does* get married. At the end of *The Sign of Four*, he shares his plans to marry Miss Mary Morstan. And yet, her role as his wife never interferes with his partnership with Holmes. Throughout the stories chronologically after their marriage, Mary is only seen as an occasional opening to the narrative. In "The Boscombe Valley Mystery," she convinces Watson that helping Holmes with a case will be good for him (Doyle *CSH* 202). In "The Five Orange Pips," she is conveniently "on a visit to her mother's" (Doyle *CSH* 218). Her absence allows Watson to simply move back in with Holmes and act as if they still shared a flat. As Mclaughlin also points out, "Dr. Watson also shows very little interest in producing children to carry on his name," (McLaughlin 12). This decision not to have children could have to do with the fact that Watson is no longer a young man when he marries. But it also could be viewed as a refusal to have something that will tie him down and limit his ability to adventure with his friend. Though the trend of

men living with men certainly reflects the era in which Doyle was writing, Watson's conscious decision to not create more familial bonds makes him updatable. Since he has no children to provide for, Watson is not defined by his medical practice or his family and he can be a childless husband in any setting.

Unlike his flat mate, Sherlock Holmes does not clearly try to represent a typical Victorian man, except in his flight from domesticity. Like Watson, his name is mentioned before *A Study in Scarlet* begins[14]. However, unlike the professional description following Watson's name, Holmes only gets a "Mr." before his. When Stamford describes Holmes to Watson, the picture of the man does not really become any clearer. In fact, he becomes a mass of contradictions. Stamford says, "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 systematical medical classes." He adds that, "his studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the-way knowledge, which would astonish his professors". Finally, the reader learns that this Holmes is "not a man that is easy to draw out, though he can be communicative enough when the fancy seizes him" (Doyle *CSH* 16). In this very first description of the focal point of these stories, the reader learns several things about Holmes. He is not a student, but he studies medicine and chemistry frequently. He does not go about his studies in a normal fashion, but he knows a great deal about many things. He does not willingly talk much, but sometimes he wants to talk quite a bit. All of these characteristics add up to a man who does not seem to fit into any specific category. This unclassifiable quality of Holmes works in complement to Watson's more stereotypically Victorian characteristics.

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[14] His name is the title of the first chapter.

Their roles in the story, as typical Victorian and enigma, also dictate what they determine to be valuable knowledge. Stamford is the one who first introduces the extent of Holmes' intelligence. Watson, though a physically able man, is also an educated one. Knowledge is important to the both of them. However, the differing views these men have about what constitutes important knowledge causes a bit of a scuffle. As Watson attempts to figure out the true nature of his flat mate, he realizes that there are certain things that the admittedly very intelligent man does not know.

> His ignorance was as remarkable as his knowledge. Of contemporary literature, philosophy, and politics he appeared to know next to nothing. Upon my quoting Thomas Carlyle, he inquired in the naïvest way who he might be and what he had done. 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. That any civilized human being in this nineteenth century should not be aware that the earth travelled round the sun appeared to me to be such an extraordinary fact that I could hardly realize it. (Doyle *CSH* 21)

This passage clearly demonstrates what Watson considers to be important and necessary knowledge. First of all, he values knowledge of all things contemporary. Knowing about the popular literature of the time as well as knowing about the current political climate is important to Watson because he believes it directly affects them as "human beings in the nineteenth century." Knowledge about the contemporary writer, Thomas Carlyle is deemed equally important by Watson. Perhaps this and his ability to quote Carlyle stem from a desire to be able to discuss important thinkers with his peers. Being able to quote a great thinker demonstrates education as well as cultural awareness. Finally, the Solar System

and the Copernican Theory are important to Watson. These are both subjects which children are taught. Therefore, the bulk of the population has known these details from a very young age. The truth of the matter is that, though he is updatable because of his lack of ties, Watson considers himself to be a product of the Victorian era, thus what is important to them is important to him.

Holmes, on the other hand, views information and knowledge as important only as long as it suits him in some purpose. After Watson confronts him about his lack of knowledge about the Solar System, Holmes presents both his companion and the reader with what has become a frequently looked-at view of the human mind. Holmes famously compares his mind to an empty attic, waiting to be filled with knowledge. He tells Watson that each man can choose what knowledge is worth placing in said attic and that fools will try to fill it with everything. Holmes' regards it as a foolish action because it forces important knowledge out of one's mind. He explains that, "the skillful workman is very careful indeed as to what he takes into his brain-attic. He will have nothing but the tools which may help him in doing his work, but of these he has a large assortment, and all in the most perfect order" (Doyle *CSH* 21). The problem, Holmes claims, is that there is a finite amount of space and that "it is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones" (Doyle *CSH* 21). He may ramble a bit in driving his point home, but what Holmes is getting at with this comparison is crucial to the difference between his way of thinking and Watson's. For Watson, all knowledge is important simply because it is knowledge. It is worth knowing, and since other people know it, you have more in common with them. Holmes, on the other hand, would highly disagree with the A.E. Housman quote, "All knowledge is precious whether or not it serves the slightest human

use." Sherlock Holmes believes that the only knowledge worth having is that which will prove useful for a man in his work. Any other knowledge not useful on a daily basis, such as the fact that the earth revolves around the sun, simply gets in the way of useful knowledge. Just because something is a well-known fact does not mean that it is actually useful for anyone in his or her day-to-day lives. One major difference between these two men is that Watson values information that is known by the majority while Holmes values information only so far as its utility to him. It demonstrates Watson's concern with others versus Holmes' concern only with himself and his work. But this difference also highlights the fact that they complete one another. Caring too much about what other people know and think is not good and neither is only caring about oneself. Watson brings a world-view to table while Holmes teaches him about how to prioritize important information.

Holmes and Watson differ in yet another major area: their responses to emotion and love. When the two men meet Miss Mary Morstan for the first time in *The Sign of Four*, Watson is immediately smitten with the woman. When she leaves 221B Baker Street, Watson turns to Holmes and exclaims, "What a very attractive woman!" (Doyle *CSH* 96). When Holmes confesses that he "did not observe," Watson becomes rather aggressive. He responds by saying, "you really are an automaton – a calculating machine. There is something positively inhuman about you at times"(Doyle *CSH* 96). To Watson, being able to appreciate the beauty of a woman is a basic trait of humanity. His objection does not include questioning Holmes' masculinity. Instead, he claims that by not observing Mary's beauty, Holmes is not a human at all. Holmes, as always, has a retort that explains why something that is so important to other people does not matter to him. He informs Watson "gently" that, "it is of the first importance…not to allow your judgment to be biased by

personal qualities. A client is to me a mere unit, a factor in a problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning" (Doyle *CSH* 96). Once again, Holmes attempts to explain to Watson, and the reader, that things that get in the way of clear, cool reasoning are not worth your while. Knowing about the Solar System and being able to acknowledge the beauty of a woman are not conducive to the functions of a detective's mind. Similarly, Watson once again asserts himself as the voice of the normal human in the flat. He represents the average human race as a whole. He knows what is common knowledge, he knows how to tell if a woman is pretty. He is the picture of a typical man and a typical man for any generation. These fundamental differences between the two men seem as though they would put a strain on their relationship. But once again, they prove complementary rather than contradictory. Too much being distracted by women is not useful, nor is completely ignoring human emotion. Holmes and Watson bring these two qualities together and that makes them a perfect pairing.

"Everyone's a Hero in Their Own Way"[15]

Though Holmes and Watson have their differences, they are one of the most famous partnerships even today. But it does not always seem as though it *is* a partnership. More often than not, there seems to be a belief that if Holmes is the hero of the stories, Watson must be his sidekick. This title would imply that Watson is somehow lesser than Holmes. One factor that seems to point to Watson as the subordinate in the relationship is the fact that Holmes views him as a kind of biographer. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," Watson attempts to leave the flat when a potential client arrives. Holmes instructs him to "stay where you

[15] *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*

are" because he would be "lost without [my] Boswell" (Doyle *CSH* 164). This is a reference to James Boswell, a man who wrote a biography of the famous author, Samuel Johnson. This comparison seems to show us how Holmes views Watson. In the beginning of his biography of Johnson, Boswell explains to the reader what he is attempting to do. He writes:

> To write the Life of him who excelled all mankind in writing the lives of others, and who, whether we consider his extraordinary endowments, or his various works, has been equaled by few in any age, is an arduous, and maybe reckoned in me a presumptuous task. (Boswell 19)

In writing a biography of the apparently great Samuel Johnson, Boswell plans to sing praises of the man. It is an homage to Johnson. When Holmes reads Watson's narratives of their adventures, he apparently views them as stories that highlight him as the main character. He chastises Watson for "attempting to tinge it with romanticism" (Doyle *CSH* 90). As far as Holmes is concerned, Watson is his biographer and any attempts to make these biographies more like stories takes away from the focus on Holmes' brilliance. The fact that Holmes is displeased by these stories hurts Watson because the latter says the stories had "been specially designed to please him [Holmes]" (Doyle *CSH* 90). If Watson is simply biographer to the great Holmes, he certainly seems to be set up as a kind of sidekick.

Another reason Watson is commonly viewed as subordinate is because of his inability to mimic Holmes' work. Even before Watson discovers what it is that Sherlock Holmes does for a living, the reader finds him using the methods of the famous detective. While attempting to make sense of why Holmes would value some information over more commonly known things, Watson tries to categorize the man in question.

> I pondered over our short conversation, however, and endeavoured to draw my deductions from it. He said he would acquire no knowledge which did not bear upon his object. Therefore all the knowledge which he possessed would be useful to him. (Doyle *CSH* 21)

In a quest to discover what Holmes' job is, Watson makes a list of the gaps in his knowledge. He uses information he possesses to try to reach a conclusion about the man's work. Unfortunately, he does not see his deducing to the end. Instead, Watson reasons that, "If I can only find out what the fellow is driving at by reconciling all these accomplishments, and discovering a calling which needs them all…I may as well give up the attempt at once" (Doyle *CSH* 22). Watson has the ability to reason like Sherlock Holmes, the ability to deduce like Sherlock Holmes but he never reaches those same heights. Time and again, the reader sees the same set-up - Holmes finds a clue and puts it to Watson to figure out the meaning behind it:

> "My dear Watson, try a little analysis yourself …You know my methods. Apply them, and it will be instructive to compare results" (Doyle *CSH* 112)

This passage elicits a response from Watson that is seen very often. Namely that he simply does not know, "I cannot conceive of anything which will cover the facts" (Doyle *CSH* 112). Frequently Watson just tells Holmes that he does not know the answer to the evidence Holmes has provided. However, there are times where he attempts to follow in the footprints of his companion.

> "But, tell me, Watson, what do you make of our visitor's stick? … Let me hear you reconstruct the man by an examination of it" (Doyle *CSH* 669)

Watson begins to draw all sorts of conclusions about the owner of the stick, mainly encouraged on by Holmes' compliments of "Good!", "Excellent!", and "Perfectly sound!" (Doyle *CSH* 669). However, Watson's efforts yield absolutely nothing of importance. Holmes' desire to be truthful forces him to inform Watson that, "most of your conclusions were erroneous" (Doyle *CSH* 670).

Holmes furthers the belief that Watson might be subordinate by talking down to him in many instances. At one point, he informs Watson that "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" (Doyle *CSH* 669). So, that is Watson's role. While not nearly as intelligent as Holmes, he provides the wrong answers which help Holmes find the right ones. He is the "conductor of Holmes' light". While Holmes seems to mean this as a compliment, it certainly comes across rather backhandedly.

But this is not the only reason Watson is generally considered to be inferior to his companion. First of all, as previously noted, Holmes appears to be grooming him to be a detective. This pedagogical relationship puts Watson in the position of student and Holmes becomes the teacher. This would imply that Watson is on a lower level than Holmes. Watson does his own fair share of perpetuating the belief that he is the subordinate in the pairing. Throughout the canon, the reader sees Watson refer to many moments where he admits to his obedience towards Holmes' instructions. In *The Sign of Four*, when Holmes no longer wants to continue explaining to Watson why emotion is a hindrance to reason, he simply changes the subject. First he informs Watson that, when it comes to a beautiful woman he "never makes exceptions. An exception disproves the rule." Then Holmes diverts the conversation by asking, "Have you ever had occasion to study character in handwriting?

What do you make of this fellow's scribble?" And Watson just follows Holmes' lead by saying, "it is legible and regular" (Doyle *CSH* 96). Holmes has such control that he is able to govern the way the conversation will go. Later in that scene he recommends a book to Watson. Moments later, Watson is reading said book as though it is the most natural thing in the world to do exactly as Holmes suggests. Not only does the reader see Holmes taking control of conversations and giving instructions to Watson, we also see Watson admitting a kind of loss when Holmes is not with him. When the pair separates in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson spends most of his letters to Holmes –and even his diary entries – wishing that Holmes would join him on the moor.

> I prayed as I walked back along the grey, lonely road, that my friend might soon be freed from his preoccupations and able to come down to take this heavy burden of responsibility from my shoulders. (Doyle *CSH* 705)
>
> Best of all would it be if you could come down to us. (Doyle *CSH* 726)
>
> I wish that he were here. (Doyle *CSH* 730)
>
> Holmes had missed him in London. It would indeed be a triumph for me if I could run him to earth where my master had failed. (Doyle *CSH* 736)

Without Holmes, Watson feels useless. He believes that the case cannot be solved unless Holmes is there to do so. The mere fact that he refers to Holmes as his "master" says everything that anyone needs to know about the perceived dynamic in this pairing.

However, the reader – and perhaps even Watson himself – might be wrong in reading the Holmes-Watson partnership as a dominant-subordinate relationship. Even as he laments the fact that Holmes is not with him to solve the case, Watson is doing his own detecting. In true Gothic fashion, Watson spies a mysterious figure while out on the moor

with Henry Baskerville. The figure looks as if he stepped out of the painting, *The Wanderer Above the Mists* by Caspar David Friedrich. He stands as a shadow overlooking the moor. Watson is immediately drawn to this man claiming that his "strange presence and commanding attitude" had given Watson "a thrill" (Doyle *CSH* 726). He asks questions of the locals to figure out the identity of the mysterious figure. Eventually he is led to the name of a small boy who brings food to the stranger. Upon following the boy, he finds the hideaway and, subsequently, the true identity of the man on the moor. It is Holmes himself, conducting his own investigation in secret. Though Watson ends up following someone unnecessary to the case, he still follows a lead to its conclusion. He also prides himself on knowing the methods that Holmes uses. Watson does reason out conclusions about the owner of the stick (Doyle *CSH* 669), even if they are the wrong conclusions. He has the aptitude for crime-solving, he just seems to lack the confidence. In fact, when Watson believes Holmes to be dead at the end of the "The Final Problem," he is able to figure out what it is that happened to his friend.

> And then what had happened? Who was to tell us what had happened then?
>
> I stood for a minute or two to collect myself, for I was dazed with the horror of the thing. Then I began to think of Holmes's own methods and to try to practise them in reading this tragedy. It was, alas, only too easy to do. (Doyle *CSH* 479)

Watson's first instinct, as usual, is to look for someone to answer the questions for him. Since Sherlock Holmes is not there, he begins to reason out for himself what happened. And what he comes up with makes complete sense. In fact, it would have been the only answer available to readers had Doyle not resurrected Holmes. Watson has the abilities to think like Holmes, but does not reach the right conclusions most of the time. However, this does

not make him inferior. It simply means that he has to be something else, something complementary, so that Sherlock Holmes can be the brain. Whether they represent the mind or the body, both men possess qualities that make them heroes.

It is rather ironic that Holmes did not know who Thomas Carlyle was[16], for he seems most similar to Carlyle's definition of a hero. In his work, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History*, Carlyle explains what he defines a hero as:

> He is the living light-fountain, which it is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world: and this not as a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven…(Carlyle 3-4)

There is that word again: luminary. When Holmes informs Watson that the latter is not "luminous himself," the implication is that the detective believes himself to be luminous. According to Carlyle, one feature of the heroic figure is his natural light that he brings to the world. With his knowledge and general enlightening of others, Holmes clearly matches Carlyle's ideal of the hero. Carlyle also writes that heroes are "the leaders of men, these great ones" and that they are responsible for "all things we that we see standing accomplished in the world" (Carlyle 3). In their essay entitled "'Don't Make People into Heroes, John': (Re/De)Constructing the Detective as Hero" Francesca M. Marinaro and Kayley Thomas refer to this notion. They write, "the Carlylian hero epitomized the strength, ambition, and moral fortitude that the Victorians sought in their leaders during the golden age of empire" (Marinaro and Thomas 65). They then use this definition to explain why Holmes is a Carlylian hero. They refer to this hero as "the man who uses his skills and

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[16] *CSH* 21

talents to serve and to better mankind" (Marinaro and Thomas 65). This notion of the thoughts of men and a leader being a hero definitely refer to Sherlock Holmes. However, as discussed in the introduction, Holmes appears as a warped version of this "Great Man" because he is not alone in what he does. He does the physical work of solving cases just as much as he does the intellectual work. Holmes may seem similar to Carlyle's "Great Man" but the existence of Watson stops him from being an obvious example. Carlyle's heroes do not have partners, and they certainly do not have "sidekicks" to aid them in their greatness. Which brings up the idea that Watson might just be another type of great man. He might not fit Carlyle's description, but neither does Holmes fully. In a way, it is the two of them *together* that presents a more heroic figure.

From the very start of Doyle's canon, Watson proves that he is a very physically brave man when he details his dangerous trek to Kandahar with his troops (Doyle *CSH* 15). Not only is he brave when the moment requires it, but Watson actively seeks out excitement and peril. When he first meets Holmes, the thing that draws him to the man is his very enigmatic nature. After Holmes manages to deduce Watson's recent whereabouts, Watson questions Stamford about how the man did it. When Stamford informs him that many people would like that same answer, Watson is thrilled. He replies, "Oh! a mystery is it?" He rubs his hands and says, "this is very piquant" (Doyle *CSH* 19). Setting aside the fact that the rubbing of the hands will become a mannerism greatly associated with Holmes throughout the canon, this is the reader's first clue that Watson does not actually desire a quiet and relaxing existence. He craves the thrill of danger, just like Holmes. In "The Adventure of the Empty House", after Holmes has revealed how he managed to survive his encounter with Moriarty, he and Watson find themselves in a familiar tableau. For Watson,

the scene is familiar and welcoming. He writes that, "it was indeed like old times when, at that hour, I found myself seated beside him in a hansom, my revolver in my pocket, and the thrill of adventure in my heart" (Doyle *CSH* 488). Watson feels comfortable with this "thrill of adventure". He is not just some buffoon who follows the brilliant Sherlock Holmes around. He is a great being in his own right. That kind of thrill and bravery does not exist in every man.

Watson's loyalty and strong moral character likewise establish him as a hero. In "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton", Holmes discusses breaking into the titular blackmailer's house. Watson informs him that he "[doesn't] like it, but I suppose it must be." Then he wonders when *they* will get started. When Holmes tells Watson that Watson will not be coming along, the good doctor pulls out the big guns. He tells Holmes, "then you are not going. I give you my word of honour – and I never broke it in my life – that I will take a cab straight to the police-station and give you away, unless you let me share this adventure with you" (Doyle *CSH* 576). First, Watson reminds the reader that he is, first and foremost a man of honor. Watson's strict position as an honorable person is a point of pride with him. That being said, he turns the idea of honor on its head by swearing on his honorable life that he will turn Holmes in if Holmes will not let him break into the house as well. Here, Watson establishes that above all, he is loyal to Sherlock Holmes. He will not let Holmes enter a potentially dangerous situation without him by his side. His bravery and quest for adventure lead him straight into "battle" with his partner. Watson may not always arrive at the right intellectual conclusions, but he is not lacking in the heroics department.

At the end of the day, it is not about who is smarter or more dominant or braver or more physically adept. Holmes and Watson have a genuine friendship. One need look no

further than Watson's final lines when he thinks his friend has died and he refers to him as "the best and the wisest man I ever knew" (Doyle *CSH* 480). These men are, above all else, a partnership. It may start out as a partnership of convenience between flat mates, but there is more to it. Simply put, the men go together. Where one finds Holmes, one finds Watson. It is evident throughout the canon. In "A Scandal in Bohemia", Watson attempts to leave the room when a client shows up. Holmes "caught [me] by the wrist and pushed [me] back into [my] chair" before informing the client that, "it is both or none." He tells the man that anything he wants to say the detective, he can say to Watson (Doyle *CSH* 164). Holmes actively keeps Watson from leaving because he knows that he needs him there. This may just be so that Watson can provide more wrong answers to inspire correct ones. However, it seems more as if Holmes is almost considering Watson a continuation of himself. It is "both or none." The men work best together**;** where Holmes goes, Watson does as well. Because, after all, where would Holmes be without his narrator? And yet, it is important to remember that though they may be "the same person" they are not interchangeable. Left alone on the moor, Watson is not able to just do Holmes' work. They need each other. They make each other better at what they do, and that is why they are partners, as opposed to a hero and his sidekick.

The BBC's *Sherlock* and the Question of Homosexuality

On July 25th, 2010 the first episode of the BBC series, *Sherlock*, premiered. Starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as Sherlock and John respectively, it was aptly titled "A Study in Pink". This series saw the characters located, still in London, but in the London of the twenty-first century. Written by Steven Moffat, this episode showed the

initial meeting between the famed pair. True to the roots of the stories Moffat and co-creator Mark Gatiss were so fond of, Holmes and Watson once again meet in a hospital after John has happened to run into Mike Stamford, former medical school friend. Upon seeing these figures relocated to the present day, it becomes clear that the qualities that define them are relevant in any setting. They are still Holmes and Watson, but there is something different about their dynamic Once again, they seem to be on a level playing field, but the relationship has a rougher tendency. Here, as in the canon, the characters of Sherlock and John represent a partnership with each man bettering the other. However, this one is more about a partnership of humanity than of crime-solving. And although this adaptation is fairly recent, is has inspired several collections of essays on themes ranging from sexuality to autism.

For one thing, this adaptation addresses the question of a homosexual bond between the men rather than a homosocial bond. As previously discussed, the fact that two single men were living together in the Victorian era was not something out of the ordinary. In today's culture this sort of arrangement raises some questions though. Were they fresh out of college, the public would most likely assume that they were just friends living together to save on rent. However, their age and the fact they are established as professionals[17] means that the consensus is that they must be *together*. Whenever this assumption is made, and that is frequently, John denies it - loudly and often. When John gets his first look at their new flat, he also meets the landlady, Mrs. Hudson. She politely informs them that, "there's another bedroom upstairs, if you'll be needing two bedrooms." To which John replies, "of course we'll be needing two" ("A Study in Pink" 14:23-14:28).

[17] As a consulting detective and a retired soldier maybe, but they are still adults with jobs.

Mrs. Hudson is not trying to insult the men, it is just that she knows another gay couple so she naturally assumes that the two men moving in together are, in fact, together. She may be the first to vocalize this belief but she is not the last by a long shot. Even in that same episode, the men find themselves on a sort of stake-out at a restaurant. The waiter, an acquaintance of Sherlock's, first refers to John as Sherlock's "date". Then he offers to bring "a candle for the table" to make it "more romantic". Both times, John quickly asserts his position by saying, "I'm not his date" ("A Study in Pink" 49:30-49:53). It becomes an almost reflex for John to remind everyone around him that he is not Sherlock's significant other. One particular time the assumption of their sexuality is different is with Irene Adler. When John confronts her after she fakes her own death, the two get into a conversation. She makes a comment about his relationship with Sherlock and the following interaction takes place:

> John: We're not a couple.
>
> Irene: Yes you are.
>
> John: Who-who the hell knows about Sherlock Holmes. But for the record if anyone out there still cares, I'm not actually gay. ("A Scandal in Belgravia" 55:07-55:24)

Irene does not simply *assume* the men are together, she is as adamant as John. There is no question here. She is telling John that he and Sherlock *are* a couple. Perhaps she does not mean romantically but she is getting at the larger point of the fact that they are linked. But the question arises: If John Watson is so adamantly heterosexual, why do audiences insist on assuming there is some sort of homosexual tension between the two men?

The answer most likely is Sherlock himself. Sure, viewers of the show and readers of Doyle's stories can draw all sorts of conclusions that tell us Sherlock Holmes is in love with

Irene Adler. However, there is really no proof. At his core, this is a man who believes that love is a hindrance to the reason of a good mind. So the result is that he is also a man who never talks about his own sexuality. In "A Study in Pink", the audience sees the two flat mates out for the aforementioned dinner. The talk turns to that of relationships, with John trying to get some information about his strange companion.

John: You don't have a girlfriend, then?

Sherlock: Girlfriend? No, not really my area.

John: Mmm. Oh, right. Do you have a boyfriend? Which is fine, by the way.

Sherlock: I know it's fine.

John: So you've got a boyfriend then?

Sherlock: No.

John: Right, OK. You're unattached. Like me. Fine. Good.

Sherlock: John, um…I think you should know I consider myself married to my work, and while I'm flattered, I'm really not looking for any-

John: No, I'm…not asking. No, I'm just saying, it's all fine.

Sherlock: Good. Thank you. ("A Study in Pink" 50:30-)

First of all, this interaction stems from a canonically Watson-like tendency to try and make Holmes more normal. This comes after John tries to explain that "normal" people do not have arch-enemies[18], they have friends and significant others. The next piece to note is that John assumes Sherlock must be gay when he says that girlfriends are not his area. For John, that is the only other option. Sherlock then assumes that *John* must be gay because he is asking these questions. Instead, John just wants information and Sherlock just does not

[18] Which is how Mycroft Holmes first describes himself to John. Sherlock does nothing to correct the misapprehension.

think about such things at all. The thing is, by *not* thinking about such things, Sherlock allows his sexuality to be questioned at every turn. In her article, "The Noble Bachelor and the Crooked Man: Subtext and Sexuality in the BBC's *Sherlock,*" Carlen Lavigne discusses this ambiguous exchange.

> Holmes is "married to [his] work," we are to understand, and according to the writers on the commentary track, we should take this disavowal of romance as an indication of the detectives' definitive asexuality. On a subtextual level, however, Holmes' ambiguous response leaves the character suspended within a realm of permanent possibility…(Lavigne 18)

The writers of this series (Moffat and Gatiss) may assume that they are portraying an asexual character. However, the fact that Sherlock neither confirms nor denies anything about his sexual orientation leaves the question of it up to the audience. Moffat himself has been quoted as saying, "[Holmes] is not interested in [sex] at all. He's interested in what his brain is doing…the fact is, people say he shows no interest in women, therefore he must be gay. He shows no interest in men, either. That's just not what he does" (Lavigne 15). But even if Sherlock himself is not interested in sex, he is still viewed in a sexual manner. Constantly, women are trying to flirt with him. Most notably, hospital worker Molly Hooper clearly has a hopeless crush. He may be without his own sexual orientation but he is not without any sexual aspects. But as an audience, we are to assume his asexuality based on the way he is presented. While a lot of the speculation about the nature of Sherlock and John's relationship comes from the fact that they are single men living together in the twenty-first century, there is more to it than that. Sherlock's ambiguous nature raises many

questions, but it is the belief that people really should be attracted to men or women that leads to him and John being labeled so often as gay.

Aside from the homosexual subtext that is found so often in this adaptation, there are other factors that separate the BBC series from its source material. For starters, this twenty-first century John Watson is a rougher John Watson. In this modern setting, the fact that John is dealing with PTSD is not only clear to the viewer but it is made clear within the first minute of the first episode. The very first shots seen by the audience are of the violence of the battlefield. Gunfire and explosions ring out ("A Study in Pink" 0:00-0:33). Rather than just letting John tell the viewer what it was he went through, the director chooses to show it through dreams and flashbacks of his. This establishes John's character as one who comes from a recent violent past. After he wakes up, the viewer sees John open a desk drawer and reveal a service pistol ("A Study in Pink" 1:20). That pistol is the first clue towards the fact that he is not the quiet-living, relaxed man he might like to be. Also, it becomes clear that John has not been able to totally leave the war behind. When John talks to his therapist, she tells him to write a blog about everything that happens to him. His response of, "Nothing happens to me," shows how ready he is to meet Sherlock Holmes and to go on adventures once again ("A Study in Pink" 2:05).

John's roughness is shown throughout the show. In the very first episode, the audience sees John shouting at Mrs. Hudson, his new landlady. She offers to get him tea, allowing him to rest his injured[19]leg. John responds by shouting, "Damn my leg! Sorry- I'm so sorry" ("A Study in Pink" 16:30). This sort of outburst is never found in Doyle's Watson. *Sherlock*'s John always seems to have all of his emotions right at the surface. Physically,

[19] Or at least limping leg.

John is more violent in this incarnation as well. In the first three seasons alone, the audience sees John shoot a man[20]("A Study in Pink"), grab onto a man to physically restrain him ("The Great Game"), and beat up Sherlock ("A Scandal in Belgravia"). Though the last is at the request of Sherlock, it goes above and beyond what the detective had in mind. This constant physical assertiveness is not dissimilar to the Watson of Doyle's canon. If one assumes Sherlock Holmes to be the brains of the operation, John Watson becomes the brawn. His profession as a doctor also aids itself to his physical prowess. That being said, the John Watson of the BBC series is not just a physically brave man, but also one who can sometimes get carried away in his violence. At the end of the first season, Moriarty uses puzzles and games to lure Sherlock closer and closer to him. The final showdown between them takes place in the empty pool of a school. While there, John – who has a bomb strapped to him – grabs Moriarty from behind in order to distract him long enough to let Sherlock escape ("The Great Game"). This is a brave man. The flip side of that is when Sherlock asks John to punch him in the face so that he can seem more pitiable to Irene Adler. When John does not answer at first, Sherlock asks if he heard him. John responds, "I always hear 'Punch me in the face' when you're speaking but usually it's subtext" ("A Scandal in Belgravia" 22:48-22:50). Sherlock punches *him* in the face to get him going and eventually John has the larger man in a headlock. When Sherlock questions him, John reminds him he was soldier. Sherlock, in turn, reminds him he was a doctor, to which John replies, "I had bad days" ("A Scandal in Belgravia" 23:11). This is a man who will use any means necessary – including sacrificing himself – to save the man with whom he is closest at one moment, and then beat that same man up the next. This adaptation takes any

[20] To be fair, a not very nice man…

lingering anger and violence that might have been repressed in Doyle's Watson and brings them to the forefront. Watson of the canon may have sometimes considered hitting Holmes in the face, but he never would have. *Sherlock*'s John is never shy about vocalizing or even physicalizing his complaints against the detective.

In addition to being a rougher person physically, the BBC's John also has a rougher relationship with Sherlock in general. The pair frequently argue with one another, or, more accurately, John yells at Sherlock and Sherlock either takes it or calmly explains why John is wrong. For example, the detective finds himself up against his greatest opponent, Moriarty, and playing a sort of game with the criminal. If he solves the case, Moriarty's hostage – with a bomb strapped to them - will live. Unfortunately, one of the women makes the mistake of starting to describe her attacker. When she is killed, Sherlock cannot help but point out that he did technically solve the case. Whether this is a coping mechanism with the loss of a human life or just a man trying to prioritize the case over the person, John decides that Sherlock is being heartless.

> John: There are lives at stake, Sherlock, actual human lives! Just so I know: do you care about that at all?
>
> Sherlock: Will caring about them help save them?
>
> John: No.
>
> Sherlock: Then I will continue not to make that mistake….I've disappointed you.
>
> John: That's good. That's a good deduction, yeah. ("The Great Game" 50:06-50:34)

Just like Doyle's Holmes and Watson had their disagreements about Watson's documenting their stories, *Sherlock*'s John finds the most annoyance in trying to explain basic human

emotions to Sherlock[21]. In this interaction, it actually upsets John how detached Sherlock is being from these cases. Sherlock makes a valid point about the difference between caring and trying to help. For John, this is unfathomable. For Sherlock, it is the way the world works. This desire to make Sherlock more human is a common theme in their relationship. In the last episode of the second season, "The Reichenbach Fall", John pulls out a quote that is familiar to Doyle readers. When Sherlock appears to not[22] care about Mrs. Hudson being shot, John calls him a "machine". Like the "automaton" of Doyle's novel, this is just another way for John to imply that Sherlock is not human. It is this insult that resonates with the doctor as he stands at Sherlock's grave at the end of the episode. When John makes his heartfelt speech about how Sherlock was the "wisest and best man" he ever knew he is directly referencing the final lines of Doyle's "The Final Problem". However here he throws in the phrase, "you were the best man and the most human-human being that I've ever known"("The Reichenbach Fall" 1:26:15-1:26:18). This speech is an apology. When Doyle's Watson is writing genuinely how he regarded the great Sherlock Holmes, it does not come as an apology. There was a genuine friendship there. In the BBC series, John has to atone for all of the times he implied that Sherlock was less than human. Their relationship is not as smooth as that of the canonical men, but it still endures because once again John Watson completes Sherlock Holmes in some way.

Part of the reason the BBC pairing works and lasts despite constant bickering and disagreements is the fact that these men *need* each other. At the start of the series, John is a man to whom nothing happens, and Sherlock is a man who, though very talented, is

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[21] Though that is not to say that this Sherlock *likes* having John blog about their adventures. In fact, he finds it completely unnecessary.
[22] Most likely because he knows it is a ruse to get John away from the hospital.

frequently mocked by his peers. When John finds out how Sherlock knew so much about him at their first meeting, he is amazed.

> John: That was… amazing.
>
> Sherlock: You think so?
>
> John: Of course it was. It was extraordinary. It was quite extraordinary.
>
> Sherlock: That's not what people normally say.
>
> John: What do people normally say?
>
> Sherlock: "Piss off"…("A Study in Pink" 20:46-21:00)

During the pause before John says "amazing", Sherlock is clearly waiting for the insult that is forthcoming. When the men arrive at a crime scene, Sally Donovan lets Inspector Lestrade know that the "freak's here" ("A Study in Pink" 22:10). Sherlock is so used to people regarding him as annoying or as a "freak" that to have someone genuinely in awe of his talents is of the utmost importance. John saves him from a world full of people ridiculing him. Similarly, Sherlock saves John from being so alone[23]. These men need each other. They may seem like they are alone in the world and that "alone is what protects [them]", but in actuality they are so deeply connected and indebted to each other that the other person is the most important to them ("The Reichenbach Fall").

Though they need each other, in this incarnation there is little to no question of John becoming a detective in his own right. Where Doyle's Holmes always seemed to be grooming Watson to learn his trade, this Sherlock only does so occasionally. This series is more focused on the relationship of the men and their individual characters than on them as a crime-fighting team. However, this does not stop people from assuming that there is a

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[23] Another fact John mentions in his graveside speech.

dominant and a subordinate in this relationship. Sherlock frequently makes comments about the fact that John's "normal" mind is much simpler than his own. Moriarty essentially refers to John as a "pet" of Sherlock's. In "The Reichenbach Fall", Moriarty says "Aren't ordinary people adorable? Oh, you know. You've got John. I should get a live-in one" (25:16-25:25). The general belief of people on the show is that John is somehow less than Sherlock because he is not as massively intelligent. But once again, these are men who complete each other. One of these men is not lesser than the other. They feed into each other's personalities and make each other better people.

At Sherlock's grave, John mentions how the detective saved him from a life of loneliness and boredom. Sherlock does this by becoming a constant presence in John's life that is not a therapist. But Sherlock also gives John the adventure and excitement he so desperately seeks. Despite John's early signs of PTSD, it becomes clear that he actually misses the excitement of war. When John first witnesses Sherlock being called on a case, the detective comes back for him.

Sherlock: Seen a lot of injuries then? Violent deaths?

John: Yes.

Sherlock: Bit of trouble too, I bet.

John: Of course, yes. Enough for a lifetime, far too much.

Sherlock: Want to see some more?

John: Oh God, yes. ("A Study in Pink" 17:00-17:25)

In front of anyone else, this admission may not have been so easy for John. What does it say about a war veteran that he misses the violence and trouble of the battlefield? However, Sherlock proves himself a similarly minded person. He is a person who gets excited over

the prospect of a serial killer. The fact that Sherlock allows John to admit, perhaps to himself even, that he still wants to see carnage and danger establishes a connection between the two men. When John finds himself unknowingly face to face with Sherlock's older brother, Mycroft, the latter also understands that John misses the war. He looks at him and says, "You're not haunted by the war, Dr. Watson – you miss it" ("A Study in Pink" 40:08-40:14). However, here John just continues staring. The connection that he has and the comfort admitting this fact to Sherlock is not present with this other Holmes. Part of it is that he has just been abducted by the man in question and believes him to be Sherlock's biggest enemy. But it also has to do with the fact that in Sherlock, he recognizes a kindred spirit. Sherlock allows John to return to a life that society expects him not to want.

Then what does John give to Sherlock in this equation? If they are truly to be regarded as partners, he must bring something to the table. So, what is it? The answer to that lies in the issue of Sherlock as a hero. In Marinaro and Thomas' article on "(Re/De)Constructing the Detective as Hero", they once again mention Thomas Carlyle's idea of a hero; this time in reference to the BBC series.

> Thus what Conan Doyle identifies through the characters of Watson and Holmes and what these adaptations further illustrate is the distinction between greatness and goodness. The BBC series directly defines this distinction toward the conclusion of the "A Study in Pink," with Detective Inspector Lestrade (Rupert Graves) informing John that, "Sherlock Holmes is a great man, and I think one day, if we are very, very lucky, he might be a good one." Lestrade does not preclude Sherlock from heroism in indicating the absence of "good" in the detective's character, but he does powerfully remind in his evocation of the words "great" and "good" that there is more to

> Carlyle's Great Man than great talent or achievement: there must be goodness as well. (Marinaro & Thomas 72)

Here, Marinaro and Thomas highlight the BBC's attempts to distinguish between a "good" man and a "great" man. Sherlock is a "great" man because of his brilliance and his talent. However, his lack of empathy and seeming disinterest in others and their well-being makes him not a "good" man. With Lestrade saying this to John, it almost appears to the viewer that he is setting up a challenge for him. As an army doctor, John helped people. He constantly tries to get Sherlock to worry about the safety of others and has no qualms about calling him out on what is seen as heartlessness. Once again, John shows he possesses qualities of a Carlylian hero. Carlyle writes:

> One comfort is, that Great Men, taken up in any way are profitable company. We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. (Carlyle 3)

One of the qualities of a Carlylian hero is that they better those around them. As John tries to make Sherlock into a "good" man, he demonstrates this quality. This kind of heroism lends itself to the notion of these men as partners as well. While Sherlock proves his greatness over and over again, John attempts to prove "profitable company" by making the detective a "good" man.

And John *does* help Sherlock to become a "good" man. However, it is not by lecturing him about care of others and empathy. It is simply by being. It is quickly established in the series that if you want to hurt Sherlock, you go through John. When Moriarty wants to finally come face to face with his "good guy" counterpart, he does so by kidnapping and strapping a bomb to John ("The Great Game"). Similarly, when Moriarty wants Sherlock to

kill himself and be branded a fraud, he threatens John ("The Reichenbach Fall"). On the other hand, the presence of John is also a saving grace for Sherlock. When he is close to death in the third season after being shot, Sherlock goes through his "mind palace" and receives advice from all of those people who are important to him: his brother, Molly Hooper, and even Moriarty. But the thing that fully saves his life is a comment Moriarty makes about "who's going to save John Watson, now" ("His Last Vow"). What causes Sherlock Holmes to wake himself up and survive a potentially fatal bullet wound is the prospect of his best friend being in danger. Which leads to yet one more thing John does to aid Sherlock: he becomes his friend. After a harrowing journey to Dewer's Hollow in "The Hounds of Baskerville", the men get into one of their usual spats. This one involves Sherlock informing John that he "doesn't have friends," something that hurts John and makes him lash out a bit. The fact that Sherlock considers himself the type of man to have arch-enemies but not friends makes John once again question the humanity of this man. Later in the episode, Sherlock does something slightly out of character – he apologizes to John. He does so by saying, "listen, what I said before, John, I meant it. I don't have friends. I've just got one" ("The Hounds of Baskerville" 52:43-52:50). John is Sherlock's friend, and that is not a term used very often by the detective – or ever, in fact.

So, John provides someone for Sherlock to worry about, someone to protect, and someone to consider a friend. He is not some subordinate ordinary human following in the shadow of the great detective. John is part of what makes Sherlock who he is. John Watson is proof of Sherlock's humanity. He disproves Sherlock's own belief that he does not, in fact, have a heart ("The Great Game"). As noted in the first season finale, Moriarty can see quite

clearly what Sherlock cannot, and that is that the detective does have a heart. Marinaro and Thomas discuss this question of heart in their article.

> To that end, in the final showdown in "The Great Game," Moriarty's men train their sniper rifles upon Sherlock's head and John's heart, aligning the two men in their respective roles of greatness and goodness: Sherlock, whose great mind has been led here by its attraction to Moriarty's, and John, the brave hostage willing to sacrifice his life in order that Sherlock might escape. (Marinaro and Thomas 77)

In an allusion to the belief that these men represent two crucial parts of a hero – heart and brains – *Sherlock* physically illustrates which man possesses which quality. When Moriarty leaves the two men and Sherlock gets the bomb off of John, he acknowledges the fact that John was willing to sacrifice himself. He informs him that "that thing [he] did…that was, um, good" ("The Great Game"). It takes a lot for Sherlock Holmes to acknowledge great deeds by others. However, he can tell what that meant and in that moment he realizes that he cares for John and would do the same for him were the roles reversed. The show demonstrates this realization when Moriarty returns: "Indeed, after Sherlock's emotional display, Moriarty returns, as do the snipers' beams – notably trained now upon Sherlock's heart" (Marinaro & Thomas 78). In this one moment, the viewer is shown that John is responsible for giving Sherlock a heart. His presence is not just as a friend, he is the figure who humanizes the great detective. This humanization is yet another way of proving their roles as partners. John betters Sherlock just as Sherlock does the same for John.

As with the Doyle canon, the BBC's versions of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson bring different qualities to the table. In the television adaptation, while there is no real emphasis on a pedagogical relationship, these men definitely learn from each other and the

John of the BBC program is not subordinate to Sherlock just as Doyle's Watson was not. In the case of Martin Freeman's John, he is the character that turns Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock into a true hero, a quality that demonstrates the very importance of Watson. Not only that, but Freeman is also clearly Watson. His PTSD might manifest itself more angrily and violently but his bravery, morality, and humanity all make the jump from nineteenth century England to the present day just fine.

CBS's *Elementary* and the Sober Companion

The United States has its own modern adaptation of Doyle's iconic characters. Premiering in September 2012, CBS's *Elementary* sees Sherlock Holmes (played by Johnny Lee Miller) living in New York City after spending time in rehab. Enter Doctor Joan Watson (played by Lucy Liu), assigned to Holmes by his father to be his sober companion, she is hired to live with Holmes and make sure he does not fall off the wagon. Immediately, several aspects appear to differentiate this adaptation from others. First of all, the meeting between these two characters is not the kismet of Doyle's or the BBC's. Joan does not happen to run into an old classmate who introduces her to Sherlock. This relationship is based upon a professional arrangement, a factor that heavily influences the way this pairing ultimately relates to its predecessors or contemporaries. The other distinguishing factor is that Watson is a woman.

Turning John Watson into Joan Watson was a decision which had the potential to alter the entire way the relationship was viewed. If viewers are so determined to find a sexual component to the Holmes/Watson relationship when they are both men, it must be even easier if it is a heterosexual pairing. Yet, this decision is not unheard of. One particular

Baker Street Irregular and author has been arguing the true nature of Watson's gender for some time. Rex Stout, author of the Nero Wolfe series, shocked his fellow "Irregulars" when he stood up at a meeting and announced that, "Watson was a woman." This belief is discussed in the book, *fic: Why Fanfiction is Taking Over the World* by Anne Jamison. In the section entitled "The Early Adventures of the Apocryphal Sherlock Holmes", Jamison addresses Stout's theories.

> Stout…made waves with this close reading, finding abundant evidence in "The Sacred Writings" of Watson's female gender in her nagging Holmes about drugs and smoking and pestering him to talk – and if that weren't enough, "Imagine a man asking another man to play him some of Mendelssohn's *Lieder* on a violin!" (Jamison 45)

As far as Stout was concerned, it was obvious from Watson's various traits that "she" was a woman. What most readers presumably regarded as professional and friendly medical concern turned into henpecking. Watson's appreciation of Holmes' violin playing, and the fact that Watson actually *requested* songs, apparently added up to Watson, in fact, being a woman. Today, viewers are preoccupied with whether there is homosexual subtext to the Holmes and Watson relationship. If Watson is a woman, another important question presents itself.

> Initially, Stout worries whether the couple lives in sin: "It was unquestionably a woman speaking of a man, yes, but whether a wife of a husband or a mistress of a lover…I admit I blushed. I blushed for Sherlock Holmes and I closed the book." He assuages his worry about the morality of Doctor Watson's and Sherlock Holmes' intimacy by deducing that they are married with further observations drawn from

> the text: Watson's assertion that he is "the most long-suffering of the mortals" and his complaint that he had become a "habit" to Holmes – "as an institution I was like the violin, the shag tobacco, the old black pipe, the index books, and others perhaps less excusable." (Jamison 45)

The fact that Stout uses a word such as "unquestionably" is fascinating. He was most definitely in the minority in his assumptions about Watson's gender. Jamison herself demonstrates this by using a male pronoun to describe Watson in this passage. For Stout to assume that these comments and reactions could only be from a woman is positively staggering. And it gets stranger. Jamison informs us that "in a quite dazzling anagrammatic tour de force of cipher discovering and decoding," Stout comes to the conclusion that Doctor Watson is, in fact, Irene Watson. The sarcasm and slight derision is apparent in the way Jamison describes this massive jump to a conclusion. Stout had decided that when Holmes was involved with Irene Adler's wedding in "A Scandal in Bohemia", he was actually the groom and that he was marrying Irene Watson. Today, it seems almost laughable that one would assume Watson was a woman. Going from the time the stories were written, when two men living together was not really that strange, to a time where everyone who meets these two men assumes that they are gay, this is an interesting pit stop. Stout does not seem to think that it would be wrong for two men to live together. He just believes that it makes more sense for Watson's character to be a woman. Jump to the year 2012, and television viewers are able to see this idea realized. Of course, *Elementary*'s Sherlock and Watson are far from married. At the present, there has been no romantic tension between them, although Holmes' asexuality is not assumed in this adaptation. Watson's gender is not the only thing that separates her from Doyle's creation and even the

BBC's incarnation. Although she is a doctor, she is not an army doctor but a surgeon, whose PTSD stems from losing a patient on the table rather than images of a battlefield. After having a patient die, this Watson has turned to the world of rehabilitation, working as a sober companion with people who have just left rehab for drug addictions.

Perhaps it has to do with how recent this adaptation is, but there are essentially no scholarly writings on this particular show. That being said, a lot can be told simply by looking that the show itself and the way the characters are interpreted. The main focus of this adaptation is on the way in which the Sherlock and Watson relationship changes and grows throughout the series. The BBC series shows the two men being set up as flat mates. They eventually grow to become good friends, best friends and also partners. The crime-solving is important there but it is more about their friendship. Doyle's creations seem to immediately hit it off as friends and while it is the crime-solving that keeps them together once Watson gets married, the canon also focuses on their relationship. The BBC never seems to focus on John becoming a detective and Doyle's canon has Holmes seemingly trying to groom Watson before realizing that it is ultimately hopeless. All of these aspects are found in *Elementary* but the difference here is that the pedagogical aspect of the relationship we see in the canon is not only present but ultimately yields results.

From the beginning of this relationship, the usual dynamic is switched on its head. As Sherlock's sober companion, Watson has quite a bit of control. She is able to enforce rules and to make him check in with her after certain amounts of time. She provides a sort of tether for the detective, a grounding factor. But the idea of Watson being a "sober companion" is not at all new. While he was not hired to stop Holmes from using drugs, Doyle's Watson made his feelings about the usage very clear. When Watson watches

Holmes shoot up in *The Sign of Four*, he tells the reader, "from day to day I had become more irritable at the sight, and my conscience swelled nightly at the thought that I had lacked the courage to protest" (Doyle *CSH* 89). As a doctor, Watson views it as professional responsibility to stop Holmes from using. However, since he is not *Holmes'* doctor, his opinion need not be heeded. He has the intention to be a sober companion but lacks the authority to enforce it. On *Elementary*, Watson is hired to do that very thing: stop Sherlock from using drugs. The power dynamic shifts when she is able to become the authority in the house. In previous incarnations, Holmes has the power to dominate any situation, no matter how professional or talented in his own right Watson is. In this case, Sherlock may have the more noticeable personality but he answers to Watson. Not only that, but this Watson – not unlike the BBC's – very rarely puts up with nonsense from Sherlock. In the first episode, after Sherlock makes a deduction that doesn't impress Watson, she points out that he has no mirrors in the apartment. She says, "it means I think you know a lost cause when you see one" ("Pilot" 28:30). From right at the start, Watson has no qualms about calling Sherlock out on his being a messed-up individual. Not only does she not mind saying these things, she most likely views it as her responsibility as his sober companion not to coddle his feelings.

While the canon and the BBC have the relationship between Holmes and Watson begin as one of convenience, this one is imposed, a fact constantly mentioned in the show. At the start, Sherlock asks what he should refer to Watson as so as to maintain the confidentiality of her true profession, settling first on the moniker "glorified helper monkey"("Pilot" 6:54). Even if Watson is in charge of overseeing Sherlock's well-being, the latter still regards her as someone existing solely to aid him. In this way, Sherlock seems to

think that he is the dominant personality, despite Watson's professional responsibility. Sherlock demonstrates this belief by essentially using Watson as an inanimate object. When Sherlock is trying to solve a case, Watson makes the mistake of trying to talk to him.

> Sherlock: Situations like these, cases that require my total concentration, I talk to you, never the other way around…I found over the years that nothing clears up a case so much as stating it to another person. I talk, they listen, and in talking, I make connections I may have otherwise missed. One-way street, not two. ("Child Predator" 8:25 & 10:00-10:15)

In a clear reference to Doyle's Holmes referring to Watson as a "great conductor of light", this incarnation of Sherlock is stating that Watson is really only useful as a sounding board. Her purpose is to listen to him but never to respond. As she shows time and again, this Watson is not one to take statements like these easily. When Sherlock tries to speak to her a little later in the episode, she responds in an annoyed manner.

> Watson: I'm sorry, were you talking to me? Because I thought I was just a cavernous expanse between two ears. ("Child Predator" 11:56-11:58)

This Watson is not one who will take things lying down. She makes her feelings known, and in doing so perhaps helps the detective become a more aware person.

Part of the difficulty in this relationship comes from the fact that they really did not choose each other. Throughout the first half of the season, the viewer is reminded of the fact that Sherlock and Watson are not a match made for the long run. At one point, Sherlock even says that, "friendship is not a requirement of cohabitation" ("While You Were Sleeping" 29:28). Considering Doyle's characters referred to each other as friends almost immediately, this is jarring. Like the BBC's Watson, *Elementary*'s also frequently gets fed up

with aspects of Sherlock's personality. During the fourth episode of the season, after Sherlock deduces some amazing fact, Watson is unimpressed. She turns to him and asks, "this is the part where I ask you how you knew that, right?" ("The Rat Race" 4:37). She refuses to cater to his showing off. Rather than genuine curiosity at how Sherlock's mind works, she makes a snide comment about realizing her role as his adoring fan. This friction between them is joined by the fact that the viewer is also constantly reminded that theirs is an impermanent situation. Both of them know that the relationship will only continue as long as Watson is hired to be Sherlock's sober companion. However, when things get particularly dicey, Watson offers to find Sherlock a new companion. This treatment of the relationship as if it were a fleeting thing is completely new. Not even marriage kept Doyle's Watson away from Holmes and here we have the doctor suggesting maybe they should separate.

As is perhaps unsurprising, when the time comes for them to part ways, Sherlock suggests that Watson say she needs more time with him. In their short time together, between the bickering, the detective realized potential in his companion. In the very first episode, Watson does some detecting of her own and though she arrives at the wrong conclusion, it is clear that she has a knack for it. Sherlock's pride at this aptitude is evident in another scene from the fourth episode.

> Watson: I think maybe he lied to me. It was the end of the night and we were talking about whether or not we'd been married and when he said he hadn't – and this isn't something I would've noticed before I started working with you – but I could swear he wasn't telling the truth.

> Sherlock: Flexing our deductive muscles, are we? I could burst with pride. ("The Rat Race" 21:26-21:44)

This Watson seems to pick up talents and abilities from Holmes. This is not something we see terribly often in the canon where Watson tries the methods and usually fails, or the BBC where John rarely tries at all. This pairing goes from being a fleeting forced arrangement to the relationship with the most professional potential. When Watson lies about Sherlock's father giving her the okay to stay on as his son's companion, Sherlock begins a rigorous training regiment with her. This includes a physical aspect. After an attack in the apartment, Sherlock takes to randomly throwing objects at Watson to gauge her ability to react.

> Sherlock: Look, given that you were held at gunpoint in this room little over a week ago, I thought, perhaps, a test of your ability to defend yourself was in order. It was. You have much to learn about the art of self-preservation. ("Details" 0:47-0:58)

Watson is not thrilled by this newfound focus on making sure she can protect herself. However, she begins to play along, even throwing things back at Sherlock sometimes. Annoying as he may be, she seems genuinely eager to learn from him. In the episode entitled "Dead Man's Switch", Sherlock asks Watson to see what she can tell about a man's handwriting. He wants to see what she learned from the reading he assigned to her. That is correct, he *assigned* reading to his roommate. And she did it. Much like Doyle's Watson, this incarnation takes the advice of Sherlock Holmes frequently. However, here she makes something of it. His lessons prepare her to becomes what she was destined to be all along – his partner.

Like any other Holmes and Watson pairing, this one establishes the fact that Watson is the "heart" of the team. At one point, Sherlock mentions that a case "has a moral component. You're good with that sort of thing" ("One Way to Get Off" 22:46). He acknowledges Watson as the ethical, moral compass of the pair. But it is more than that, as it always is. When the truth comes out that Watson is not longer being paid to be Sherlock's companion, Sherlock offers a counter arrangement. He informs Watson that he knew all along she had been let go, but that he let her stay on and did not say anything. So, he suggests something else.

> Sherlock: Explain what you have been to me and what I believe you can be to me. Partner…And lest you think this is an act of charity, a gift from a grateful client, let me assure, it is not. 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. ("Details" 28:35-28:41 & 28:58-29:33).

It turns out that changing something as fundamental as Watson's gender does not alter the ultimate nature of this relationship. At the end of the day, Watson is Sherlock's partner. S/He is his equal as well as a person who makes Sherlock a better version of himself. In this adaptation, she proves to be a detective in her own right, learning from the best. However, she also helps to make the best even better than he was to begin with.

There are few names that go together more in the cultural mind than those of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. In Doyle's canon, it was easy to interpret Watson as the brilliant detective's buffoonish sidekick. However, in reality, he was just as heroic as Holmes. Together, they created one exceedingly strong hero with brilliance and bravery. They were partners who bettered one another. Modern adaptations also illustrate this

notion of the two characters bettering each other. In the BBC's *Sherlock*, viewers see a John that turns Sherlock into a good man and a Sherlock who saves John from himself. On CBS's *Elementary*, the potential pedagogical relationship that most incarnations allude to is fully realized, and the two become a crime-solving team to envy. And yet, though these adaptations show new spins on the relationship, John Watson is always clearly John Watson – or Joan. The qualities that define Doyle's character, his bravery and morality, are always there. We can tell it is Watson, because his internal character is consistent, even as it adapts to fit the time. And Holmes' relationship with Watson endures is because Watson has something to offer to the great detective. He offers the potential for humanity as well as heroism. Sherlock Holmes needs John Watson, and that is something that we will see over and over again in all imaginings of the pair.

Chapter Two

The Adventure of the Woman: In Which Irene Adler Endures Because She is a Boundary Pushing, Modern Woman in Any Time or Place

"In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex"
(Doyle "A Scandal in Bohemia")

"To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman" (Doyle *Complete Sherlock Holmes Volume I (CSH)* 161). This is how the reader is first introduced to the character of Irene Adler: not with a professional title like John Watson, M.D., but singled out as above the rest of her sex. Before her name is even stated, Adler's position as an important figure is uniquely solidified within the Holmes canon. Considering that she appears only in the story "A Scandal in Bohemia," it might perhaps surprise readers that Adler endures as a character even today, appearing in many of the modern adaptations. What is it that sets her apart from any of the other one-off characters? Most broadly, it has to do with her besting of the great Sherlock Holmes. One unchanging aspect of Irene's character - from Doyle's original story to the modern television adaptations of today – is the fact that she manages to wrangle the power in a situation away from Holmes himself. She does this by being a woman who pushes the boundaries of whatever setting she is in. Doyle's Adler is hardly a

typical Victorian woman. She is an adventuress. *Sherlock*'s Irene works as a dominatrix. *Elementary*'s Irene is a beautiful art restorer who also happens to be an art forger. This tendency to be more than what is expected makes Irene a character suited to any time or place.

Doyle's Adler – The Adventuress Outwitting the Automaton

"A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891) is the first short story within the Sherlock Holmes canon, following the novels *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*. In this story, Holmes and Watson are visited by a masked man who is revealed to be the King of Bohemia. He comes to them seeking help before his upcoming nuptials. He tells the men that a woman from his past, Irene Adler, possesses a photograph that he would prefer his betrothed never see. Holmes promises to retrieve the photo from Miss Adler and, in so doing, somehow finds himself a part of her wedding. After going to her town to scope out where she lives, he sees a handsome man enter, then leave her house. Adler quickly follows, and Holmes quickly follows her – right to a church. He appears just in time to act as a witness in the marriage of Irene Adler and Godfrey Norton, lawyer. What follows is a game of cat and mouse where the power dynamic between Holmes and Adler constantly changes. First, Holmes disguises himself as a vicar in order to gain entry into her home when he feigns injury in a staged fight. Once inside, he tricks Adler into showing him where she keeps the photograph, with help from Watson and his perfectly timed call of "Fire!" Proud of himself for outsmarting her, Holmes plans to return in the morning to steal the picture. Instead, he finds a letter from Miss Adler, informing him that she figured out his plan and intends to leave the country with her new husband. In the letter, she promises never to reveal the

photograph, and even sends a small picture of herself for the king to hold onto – a picture that Holmes ends up keeping for himself.

Though the plot of this story may seem relatively simple, it has something that few other stories in the Doyle canon have: a character that remains an integral part of the Holmes universe. Irene Adler appears in this story only, but she is constantly associated with Sherlock Holmes. The first step in figuring out what makes her endure as a figure is to look at the woman herself. Aside from Watson's opening statements about Adler – which we will come to, never fear – the first description the reader gets of her is from the King. He tells Holmes and Watson:

> Some five years ago, during a lengthy visit to Warsaw, I made the acquaintance of the well-known adventuress Irene Adler. The name is no doubt familiar to you. (Doyle *CSH* 165).

The fact that the King assumes Holmes and Watson would know her name raises the question of what it is she has done to make it a household one. According to the royal client, she is known for being an "adventuress". The term "adventuress" refers to "a woman who enjoys or seeks adventure". A secondary definition clarifies the term a bit more: "A woman who seeks social or financial advancement by dishonest or unscrupulous methods". So, the connotation of this word is not a positive one. It is a term generally associated with a woman who uses her sexuality to get ahead in the world. What stands out about the word itself is that it is a feminization of a usually male-associated word. When one hears the term "adventurer", it brings to mind stories of men who go out into the empire. It makes us think of novels such as Rider Haggard's *She* and the mystical, exotic journey taken by the men in it. In short, "adventure" is something for a man – and a positive thing, at that. When the

term is applied to a woman, however, it takes on a devious and dishonest tone. Why would this be?

For starters, the notion of an "adventuress" was something that went against what were deemed appropriate gender roles in the Victorian era. In a chapter from *The New Woman and Her Sisters: Feminism and Theatre, 1850-1914*, entitled "The Adventuress: *Lady Audley's Secret* as novel, play, and film", Zoe Aldrich provides readers with some characteristics of the adventuress, via a quote from Jerome K. Jerome's *Stageland*:

> "She has grit and go in her. She is alive. She can do something to help herself besides calling for "George" (Aldrich, quoting Jerome 160).

An adventuress is a woman who can survive on her own, a woman who thrives and is passionate. Above all, she is a woman who can be self-sufficient and does not need a man to get by – an unorthodox thought for the Victorian era. Aldrich also references a little verse from a soap fan magazine:

> These are a few of the man-ipulators,
>
> Those women who control men and often make them look foolish.
>
> Women who control their men.
>
> Women who control *all* men.
>
> Women we wish we could be more like. (Aldrich 160)

An adventuress takes hold of men. An adventuress is a figure women aspire to be. Women apparently desire the power to control any man they meet. As Aldrich puts it, "such women were seen to pose a definite threat to the Victorian male establishment" (Aldrich 160). By referring to her as an "adventuress", the king essentially tells the reader that Adler is a

disruption to the natural order and the normal way things are run. And this is not surprising when the reader learns what it is she does for a living.

When Holmes looks Miss Adler up in his index, the reader learns that she is an American and a former prima donna (Doyle *CSH* 165). Her nationality and her occupation further distance her from the stereotypical woman of her time. As a woman born in New Jersey, she is an outsider and someone who would not necessarily feel compelled to assimilate into the European societal norms. As an opera singer, she was a part of a profession that involved lots of traveling and not much setting down of roots. It was also a profession notoriously linked with women who become royal mistresses. In the late nineteenth century, Lillie Langtry and Lola Montez were two women whose lives resemble that of Irene Adler. In 1877, Langtry was seated next to the Prince of Wales at a dinner party. He quickly became infatuated with the young actress and made her his mistress. It was common knowledge at the time that royalty engaged in extramarital activities, and Langtry was the perfect choice for a mistress. As an actress she garnered a lot of attention, was well-traveled and talked about. She was also a strong-willed woman. One particularly vulgar but wonderful anecdote has the Prince complaining that "I've spent enough on you to build a battleship," and Langtry replying "And you've spent enough in me to float one". Lola Montez did not have a successful career as a dancer, but she did become a courtesan to Ludwig I of Bavaria. However, her arrogance and influence over the king made her extremely unpopular. In addition to being renowned mistresses, these women also found themselves in great cultural circles. Langtry was a friend of Oscar Wilde while Montez is

said to have had an affair with Franz Liszt and been friends with George Sand.[24] From what the king tells Holmes and Watson about Adler, she seems a prime candidate to be a royal mistress and to be someone who would use her profession and cultured ways to move up in society. This makes her appears as a devious and cunning woman who would stop at nothing to get what she wants.

So, what does Irene Adler want? Well, the king provides an answer to that question in his final description of her:

> [Irene Adler] Threatens to send them [the king's family and betrothed] the photograph. And she will do it. I know that she will do it. You do not know her, but she has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men. Rather than I should marry another woman, there are no lengths to which she would not go – none (Doyle *CSH* 166)

According to his majesty, Adler is employing an "if-I-can't-have-him-no-one-can" philosophy, a rather petty motivation. But the king also said that Miss Adler is essentially a beautiful woman who acts like a man, with strength and resolve. And she is willing to turn that resolve to threats simply because a man with whom she had a brief relationship with is going to marry someone else? That seems unlikely. But, then again, consider the source: the person telling Holmes and Watson that crazy jealousy and desire for the king are behind Irene's threats is, well, the king himself. For Irene's part, she ends up marrying a man she deems "better than he [the king]" (Doyle *CSH* 175). She also promises never to release the photograph, though she chooses to hold onto it as a sort of protection. Perhaps jealousy was a motive made up in the apparently self-confident mind of the king. Then again, Adler

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[24] Biographies of Langtry and Montez come from *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

does refer to the king's wronging of her in her final letter, seeming unhappy with the way things between them had turned out. Maybe she resented the fact that she was never actually a viable marital option for him. Towards the end of the story the king laments that "Would she have not have made an admirable queen? Is it not a pity that she was not on my level?" (Doyle *CSH* 175). Social conventions, that appear to exist in Bohemia as well as in England, state that a woman of Irene Adler's status would never be an acceptable match for royalty as anything more than a mistress. The king certainly seems to wish he could have married her. Perhaps his inability to do so made him believe she pined as much for him as he did her. Given what we know about Miss Adler's character, it is strongly possible that her motives behind the threat were purely to secure power over someone in the royal family; jealousy may not have factored into it after all. It was, perhaps, just a way for her to get back at a man who "cruelly wronged" her. In the king's mind, however, all roads lead back to his being so desirable that a woman would threaten blackmail to stop his wedding. Which means that even his descriptions of Miss Adler may be somehow unreliable.

When Watson first sets eyes on Irene Adler, he certainly thinks the king was mistaken in the descriptions he had given of the woman. As Watson waits outside Adler's house for Holmes' cue to yell, "Fire!" he begins to feel badly about what he is doing:

> I do not know whether he [Holmes] was seized with compunction at that moment for the part he was playing, but I know that I never felt more heartily ashamed of myself in my life than when I saw the beautiful creature against whom I was conspiring, or the grace and kindliness with which she waited upon the injured man. (Doyle *CSH* 172)

Watson has been a soldier - he has presumably killed people – and yet he is his most ashamed at the prospect of tricking a beautiful woman. Her beauty is only part of the cause for his hesitation. More importantly, she is behaving as a good Victorian woman should. Watson writes that Adler is taking care of Holmes – whom she believes to be an injured clergyman – with "grace" and "kindliness." These qualities bring to mind an image of the Victorian woman as the "angel in the house." At the time Doyle was writing, the idea of domesticity was viewed as an inherently feminine quality. A woman was expected to take care of house and home with grace and ease. The fact that Watson feels so badly about tricking this woman is because in his eyes she represents all that is good and pure in an upstanding Victorian lady – beauty, grace, kindness. Then Watson goes on and justifies his and Holmes' actions to himself:

> I hardened my heart…After all, I thought, we are not injuring her. We are but preventing her from injuring another. (Doyle *CSH* 172)

Watson tells himself that he and Holmes are simply helping Irene by preventing her from doing something drastic, like threatening a King. The implication here is that Miss Adler knows not what she is doing and that it is the responsibility of the men to stop her from causing harm to someone else. They are protecting her from herself. This justification brings to mind the idea of pleading insanity in a murder trial. Watson seems to be applying this concept to Irene, which makes it seem as though her natural state as a woman puts her on par with an insane man who has no control over his actions, nor any idea of their consequences. She is, in Watson's mind, a graceful and kind woman who needs to be protected, even from herself. Essentially, Watson portrays Adler as a good Victorian woman who needs help from men to stop her from committing a crime.

But, we know from the beginning of the story that Watson's opinion of this woman changes. Though the bulk of the opening is a description of Holmes's feelings towards Adler, the last sentence is Watson giving his own opinion to the reader. He writes "And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler of dubious and questionable memory" (Doyle *CSH* 161). Later in the story, Watson mentions Adler and he tells the reader that he will continue to call her that, rather than use Holmes' respectful title of "The Woman" (Doyle *CSH* 172). This new view of Irene Adler is added by Watson once the story reaches its end. When he went back and looked at this case, these asides and disparaging labels were added. It leads the reader to ask: what changed between the time when he regretted tricking the kindly Irene Adler and when he sat down to write about this adventure? The answer that presents itself is that Adler proved to be less of the lovely Victorian woman that Watson had originally believed. Once she is seen to be strong-willed and quick-thinking and fully aware of her actions, she becomes a different kind of woman. Watson, good old traditional Watson, decides she is of questionable memory when she no longer fits into the category of femininity that he respects and to which he responds. Irene Adler is no Mary Morstan - she is no damsel in distress who really needs to be saved by Holmes and Watson. No, Irene Adler is a player in her own right. This makes her more disreputable in Watson's eyes; what it does for Holmes' opinion of her is another story.

Throughout the canon, readers will see Holmes interact with several women in different ways. Sometimes they are clients, sometimes they are the criminals, and sometimes they are simply suspects. First, we have Miss Violet Hunter in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches". Miss Hunter comes to Holmes and Watson to seek help when her employer begins acting strangely. Throughout the story, she proves to be an intelligent

woman, so much so that Watson apparently sees her as a potential mate for Holmes. At the story's conclusion he writes, "As to Miss Violet Hunter, my friend Holmes, rather to my disappointment, manifested no further interest in her when once she had ceased to be the centre of one of his problems" (Doyle *CSH* 332). If Miss Violet Hunter seems so right for Holmes, why does she not appear as a potential love interest for him in later adaptations? She is a name only known to those familiar with this story, while her predecessor, Adler is known to anyone with a passing familiarity with Holmes. This is most likely because Miss Hunter, though smart, is not able to outsmart Holmes. Then there is Mrs. Gibson from "The Problem of Thor Bridge". Though her status as victim might make it seem as though she would not be an important figure to look at alongside Adler, Mrs. Gibson is unique in that she is also the criminal of the story. Jealous of her husband's attraction to Miss Dunbar, their governess, Mrs. Gibson came up with a plot to kill herself in such a way that the girl would be framed and arrested. That level of jealousy is clearly stronger than Adler's, and yet the name of Mrs. Gibson and the story itself do not often come up when discussing Doyle's works. Perhaps this is because Holmes figures it out in the end and Mrs. Gibson is not successful in her treachery. Miss Hunter is a potential love interest and Mrs. Gibson is clever enough to almost fool Holmes, yet it is Adler who is always remembered

From the start, we know that Irene Adler is an important figure through her identification as "The Woman". She holds this title in the attic-like mind of the great Sherlock Holmes. In fact, the entire opening of the story sounds like it is from Holmes' perspective, as dictated to Watson. The reader is told that Adler "eclipses the whole of her sex" in Holmes' eyes, but that is quickly followed with a caveat, one that sounds very much like the voice of Holmes himself:

> It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen; but as a lover he would place himself in a false position. (Doyle *CSH* 161)

It almost sounds as though Watson read aloud from his narrative and, upon hearing Adler given such high praise, Holmes quickly jumped in to dissuade any notion of romantic feeling. The use of the word "machine" brings the reader back to the previously recorded adventure, *The Sign of Four*. After Miss Mary Morstan had left their flat, Watson was appalled that Holmes did not seem to appreciate the woman's beauty. The doctor referred to his companion as "an automaton – a calculating machine" and told him "there is something positively inhuman in you at times," (Doyle *CSH* 96*).* in "A Scandal in Bohemia", Watson is again comparing Holmes to a machine, except this time, it seems like a compliment. His reasoning and observation skills make him not like other humans, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. From *The Sign of Four* to *"*A Scandal in Bohemia*"* Watson seems to have learned to appreciate the factors that set Holmes apart. Attraction and emotion get in the way of what Holmes does best. In fact, later in the story, Watson mentions Holmes being, "as ever, deeply attracted by the study of crime…" (Doyle *CSH* 161). Crime and detection are attractive to Sherlock Holmes – and that is beneficial. Attraction to a woman would be a hindrance. And so Watson – or just possibly Holmes – tries to make sure the reader understands that any lasting impression Adler makes will not be one of a romantic kind. The idea of love is compared to "grit" in the mechanism of Holmes' mind. However, we learn after his first encounter with Adler – when he

inadvertently acts as a witness to her wedding – that he is able to appreciate that she is beautiful. When he tells Watson of his adventure, he mentions that, "I only caught a glimpse of her at the moment, but she was a lovely woman with a face that a man might die for" (Doyle *CSH* 169). Holmes can acknowledge beauty; through his observations he can tell that she is, objectively, an attractive woman. He does not, however, let the reader know how the beauty makes him feel. He acknowledges it only by the narrative he is able to create around it. He can see what her beauty might inspire in others. That being said, he also acknowledges that Miss Adler's groom, Mr. Godfrey Norton, is a "remarkably handsome man" (Doyle *CSH* 168). Holmes is able to identify beauty in both sexes, yet neither seems to have an effect on him. But if her beauty does not inspire feelings of love or lust within the detective, what is it that makes Adler "The Woman"?

The answer to this question has to do with the fact that Irene Adler is very similar to Holmes himself. For starters, they are both singular beings. The fact that Adler is defined as an adventuress makes her unique. Her ability to be both the kindly gracious Victorian woman as well as one who threatens also sets her apart. She is a mass of contradictions – face of a woman, drive of a man, an opera singer and adventuress, but not a woman who sleeps with a married royal – which all combine to make her "the" one and only woman. Sherlock Holmes is unique himself in that he is the only existing consulting detective, because he created the job. He represents a new class of crime-fighter. Another connection the two characters have is their ability to think logically and methodically. In her letter to Holmes at the end of the story, Adler explains how she came to beat him to the punch and escape before he got the picture:

> You really did it very well. You took me in completely. Until after the alarm of fire, I had not a suspicion. But then, when I found how I had betrayed myself, I began to think. (Doyle *CSH* 174)

Like Holmes himself, Adler is able to adapt to new situations. Once she realized that Holmes had tricked her into revealing the location of the photograph, she immediately began to think of her new plan. Her ability to think on her feet and to work out what had happened puts her in a position as a thinker similar to Holmes. The other quality that solidifies their connection is the fact that each is a master/mistress of disguise. The first time Holmes appears to Miss Adler, he is dressed as a "drunken-looking groom," the second time he is a "simple minded clergyman" (Doyle *CSH* 167 & 170). Once she realizes she has been tricked, Adler reflects on the fact that she had been inclined to trust him when he was in clerical garb (Doyle *CSH* 174). She, like Watson, was taken in by Holmes' disguise; but, because she is such a singular woman herself, Irene is able to trick Holmes in return. Her background gives her the ability to slip by Holmes and Watson in plain sight:

> But, you know I have been trained as an actress myself. Male costume is nothing new to me. I often take advantage of the freedom which it gives. (Doyle *CSH* 175)

Adler cheekily bids goodnight to Holmes and Watson while dressed as a young man. Holmes remarks that "I have heard that voice before", and yet is unable to identify her (Doyle *CSH* 173). The fact that she dresses as a man further identifies her as a woman who pushes boundaries of society. The mere fact that she gains "freedom" dressing as a man shows readers that Adler recognizes her limitations, but does not let them hold her back.

Because Adler and Holmes are so similar, the story features a constantly shifting balance of power. Holmes disguises himself and hopes to find out what sort of nefarious

deeds she is up to with Mr. Godfrey Norton, only to realize that she was simply getting married. He then dresses up again to trick her into revealing her secret hiding place – she does and he wins that round. However, at the end of the story, Miss Adler comes out on top. The fact that she outsmarts Holmes, and the fact that she is a *she* are what make her an enduring character. The reader, however, must ask why it is that she beats the great detective. He is not easily beaten, so why does this one work out in her favor? First of all, Adler manages to trick Holmes simply by acting honorably. When they find her gone, Holmes, Watson, and their royal client assume she will use the photograph for some sort of blackmail. However, Adler promises not to do so unless the king should act against her. Her honor and the strength of her word throw Holmes for a loop at the story's end.

Another reason Irene Adler has to come out the winner is because she represents the future. In his own way, Holmes signifies the future of detection; his use of the microscope and his ways of thinking are beyond the skills and abilities of the police force. But Adler is even more modern than that. As a new kind of woman, she is able to adapt to new situations. She is a fluid being whose versatility enables her to win. Adler demonstrates this fluidity by playing a range of roles just in this one story. She threatens like a criminal but is also a woman who takes in an injured clergyman to help him. She is a resolute woman with a "soul of steel" who falls in love and is able to leave past wrongs in the past. Irene Adler plays all of these roles with such finesse that it is clear they are part of her very being. As a female character that represents a completely new and modern kind of figure, it makes sense that she would be the one woman to stand out to the ever-looking-forward Sherlock Holmes.

BBC's *Sherlock* – Knowing When You're Beaten with the Dominatrix and the Detective

Irene Adler makes her appearance in the second season premiere of the BBC's *Sherlock*. The episode is appropriately titled "A Scandal in Belgravia" and first aired on May 6th, 2012. In this episode, Sherlock and John are tasked by a mysterious and royal client to get some compromising photographs back from a dominatrix named Irene Adler. Along the way it becomes clear that compromising photographs are only one part of her arsenal. Within the episode she fakes her own death, enlists the help of the Baker Street Boys and assists Moriarty with plans to commit an act of terrorism. The viewer's first image of Irene is of a red-nailed hand holding a phone. This shot comes right after Moriarty gets a phone call that stops him in his plans to kill Sherlock and John[25]. By having Irene's hand as the next image, the viewer sees a connection established between her and Moriarty. In making such a connection, writer Steven Moffat and director Paul McGuigan bring together two of the most enduring of Doyle's characters. Allying Irene Adler with Jim Moriarty so early on turns her into a much more nefarious character than Doyle's scorned woman whose motives were never truly clear. In fact, Irene's loyalties are constantly in flux throughout this episode. Another question one finds oneself asking as we watch the episode is whether or not Irene Adler ends up on top in this particular incarnation. Though the power dynamic constantly changes, I would argue that in the end, Irene dominates Sherlock, in this case in more ways than one.

For starters, we must look at how Irene Adler is portrayed in this adaptation. Played by Lara Pulver, this incarnation has a very different title associated with her than "adventuress". After we see her hand holding the phone that called Moriarty, we watch

[25] We had last seen Sherlock and John about to be shot by snipers in a school pool as Moriarty told them that they had become an obstacle.

Irene walk towards a room. Seen from the back, the audience is treated to a clear view of her undergarments through her black lace dress; in her hands, she holds a riding crop. She addresses an unseen figure by asking, "Have you been wicked your highness?" ("A Scandal in Belgravia" ("ASiB") 3:39). As she snaps the riding crop, we realize that we are looking at a royal mistress for the modern age: this Irene Adler is a dominatrix. The next time we see Irene, she is stroking a newspaper photo of Sherlock and then her riding crop. The link between attraction and domination is established even before we have seen her face. The first time an image of Irene's face appears onscreen, it is in a photograph that Sherlock is given ("ASiB" 17:51). This intentional withholding of her face from the audience until Sherlock sees her for the first time mirrors nicely to the way Doyle had most of the information about Miss Adler come before the detective had even met her. In this instance, we see Irene and Sherlock looking at photos of each other simultaneously; setting up an even playing field. During this moment, we get a narrative description of Irene from Mycroft. The elder Holmes informs Sherlock that, "She's been at the center of two political scandals in the past year and recently ended the marriage of a prominent novelist by having an affair with both participants, separately" ("ASiB" 18:02-18:10). According to Mycroft "there are many names for what she does. She prefers 'dominatrix'" ("ASiB" 18:26). He also introduces that infamous title of "The Woman," which Adler herself uses on her website, where she also encourages you to "know when you're beaten." This is one way Irene is adapted to the twenty-first century. In a world where women can ostensibly do anything, the way she separates herself is through her highly sexualized profession.

As he gets ready to meet Irene, Sherlock tells John that, "going into battle, I need the right armor" ("ASiB" 22:08). He treats their meeting as a war – and so does she. Irene tells

her assistant she plans to wear her "battledress" ("ASiB" 23:15). For Sherlock, the armor becomes a vicar's collar, for Irene it is her naked body. From the start, Irene uses her comfort with sexuality to disarm and discombobulate Sherlock. And it works. As she sits in front of him, totally naked, Sherlock realizes that he cannot read her at all. She is a blank slate and he can deduce nothing. Is this because she is completely bared, leaving him without his usual physical clues? Or is it because she represents a kind of woman that he has never dealt with before: a woman who seems to have no shame and who will look him square in the eye? Women and sexuality are things with which Sherlock does not have a lot of experience. To see that we need only look at the very first episode where he declared girlfriends to not be his "area". Or, we could even look to this very episode, when Sherlock insists that sex doesn't frighten him, prompting Mycroft to ask how he would know. The implication that Sherlock might very well be a virgin contrasts him most mightily against this woman whose entire being revolves around sexuality. Even when she tries to get Sherlock to give back the phone with the photos, she chants, "Give it to me" over and over – arguably sexual.

In Doyle's story, the reader sees that Watson's opinion of Irene Adler changes from the time he actually encounters her to when he finally sits down to write about the adventure. A similar shift happens here. When John first locks eyes on Irene in all her nakedness, he is immediately flustered and asks her to put clothes on. However, he also tries to make her notice him by answering questions she had only asked Sherlock. After Irene drugs Sherlock and takes back her phone, John's opinion of her shifts away from confused but attracted and becomes more annoyed. As he listens to the vulgar moans that

come with every text she sends Sherlock[26], it is clear to the viewer that John is slightly exasperated. He does not seem to support a relationship between the two, though he does seem intrigued by the possibility that Sherlock might actually be attracted to someone.. After Irene fakes her death to avoid trouble with some bad guys, John is the one to discover she is actually alive. What are his first words upon seeing her? - "Tell him you're alive" ("ASiB" 53:28). This statement, followed by a threat to come after her if she does not, shows John's concern for the well-being of Sherlock. John may not understand what is going on between Sherlock and Irene but he knows enough to see how much her supposed death has affected the detective. It is clear from his face that John's opinion of Irene, which originally leaned towards intrigue, lowers considerably when she hurts and upsets his friend. Doyle's Watson changes his opinion of the woman when he realizes she is not really a perfect, sweet Victorian woman. The BBC's John changes his opinion of her when she hurts his friend one too many times.

And what about Sherlock himself? Just as in the original source material, this adaptation leaves the audience in constant wonder about how exactly Sherlock feels about Irene. This time, however, it has more to do with sexual and physical attraction than romance. From the moment he is told what she does for a living and how she protects her best interests, Sherlock realizes that Irene is simply interested in a power play. Much like her Victorian counterpart, this Irene makes it clear that she is no blackmailer. Doyle's Adler makes a threat such as is usually found in blackmail, but she has not specific request. She lets the king know that she has the photograph and tells him she will show it to his family and fiancée. But she does not give him an "unless". There appears to be nothing she wants

[26] She took the liberty of changing his ringtone.

in exchange for the promise of not releasing the photo. In the end, she promises not to do so simply of her own accord. The BBC's Irene is similar. She explains that she keeps the pictures "not for blackmail, just for insurance" ("ASiB" 33:36-33:38). They appear to be protection against some unknown but dangerous entity. Perhaps it is Moriarty, or perhaps it is the British government, or perhaps someone even worse. The point is that her true endgame is power, which honestly intrigues and possibly excites Sherlock; she clearly has a powerful effect on him. When he first sees her in person, he is rendered speechless by her nudity. However, it is not a flustered speechless necessarily, at least not like John's. Regardless of whether or not he is aroused, Sherlock bounces back and quickly moves on to goading her in order to make her think about the case that had recently been brought to his attention. It involves a man in a car and a man looking at the river. The first man's car backfires and the other man drops down dead. Sherlock is endeavoring to figure out what happened[27] and brings Irene into his "mind palace" with him as he attempts to work it out. They talk it over in his fantasy world like a pair of detectives on a procedural drama. She is established as someone who could easily be a detective like Sherlock. But once again, like with John, it is not enough for Sherlock and Irene to seem just like potential partners. It turns out that Irene has hidden the photographs in a safe and Sherlock has limited time to figure out the code[28]. Irene insists that he does know the code and he just needs to think. Eventually, it turns out the code is Irene's measurements. The fact that Sherlock *does* figure it out implies that he was closely inspecting her body, possibly out of attraction. But maybe it is just some of that good old-fashioned Holmesian observation. Regardless of how he was

[27] It turns out a boomerang clocked the victim on the head.
[28] There are some angry Americans with guns who also want the pictures and want them quickly.

able to figure out that code, there are several moments that point to the possibility that Sherlock might be attracted to Irene. First off he never responds to her many text requests for dinner. When Irene tells John about this, the doctor is in disbelief because Sherlock is "Mr. Punchline" and always craves the last word. Irene asks the question many viewers have: Does that make her special? ("ASiB" 54:49 & 54:52). Everyone around Sherlock seems to think that she is special to him. When she is found dead (though not really), Mycroft, John, and Mrs. Hudson prepare for Sherlock to relapse into drug use. They all expect him to react horribly to her death because they all assume that she is important to him somehow, most likely in a romantic way. But knowing Sherlock's virtually nonexistent romantic history it seems unlikely that it is love he feels for this woman. So, we once again come back to the question of what makes Irene Adler so important.

Unlike Doyle's stories, there are women in the BBC universe who appear in essentially all of the episodes. Mrs. Hudson does show up several times in the canon but her presence is much clearer and frequent in this television adaptation. In this particular episode, Sherlock quickly jumps to Mrs. Hudson's rescue after his older brother tells her to "shut up". He quickly chastises Mycroft, though he then tells her that she should, in fact, shut up. Later in the episode, Sherlock protects Mrs. Hudson yet again when she is held hostage by those angry Americans - who are still in search of Irene's phone. After making sure his landlady is alright, Sherlock takes revenge on the attacker by throwing him out of a window…several times. The other woman in this episode is Molly Hooper. Prior to this second season, the audience has seen that Molly is greatly attracted to Sherlock. We have also seen Sherlock use that to his advantage by putting on the charm until she agrees to help him with something and then letting the smile slip off his face. His treatment of Molly

Hooper at the 221B Christmas party is particularly painful to watch. He uses his brilliant deductive skills to conclude that Molly has a new boyfriend for whom she carefully wrapped a present (while the others look like garbage, apparently) and put on nice lipstick (to distract from the small size of her mouth), etc. etc. It comes as a surprise to no one in the room but Sherlock that the special gift is for him. What does surprise the others is that he apologizes, for, as Molly puts it "always saying such horrible things". He kisses her on the cheek and in that moment we see the humanity that is Sherlock. Of course, he also disregards and is downright rude to John's current girlfriend, but that is unsurprising. The point of it all is that this episode features some very important moments between Sherlock and the women in his life. Yet, Irene Adler stands out above all others.

It all comes back to the idea of the balance of power. Throughout the episode, we see power shift hands between Sherlock and Irene, much more frequently than within the canon story. The best way to illustrate how power transfers is to diagram it chronologically:

1. When the pair first lay eyes on each other, Irene catches Sherlock off-guard by being naked while at the same time immediately seeing through his disguise. **Power: Irene**
2. By employing his smoke alarm ruse, Sherlock tricks Irene into looking towards her hiding place for the phone. **Power: Sherlock**
3. However, Sherlock is so sure of himself after he gets the phone away from her that he fails to see what it coming. In this case it is a needle in the back that knocks him out. **Power: Irene**

4. As Irene sends text after text asking Sherlock to have dinner with her, he ignores every single one. **Power: Sherlock**
5. Her faking her own death reveals how much of a hold she really has on him (sexual, romantic, or otherwise) as his friends begin to think his drug addiction is starting again. **Power: Irene**
6. He finally texts back "Happy New Year – SH" and gets the last word. **Power: Sherlock**
7. He makes a dummy phone in order to get her to finally enter her passcode after he's been wrong twice. **Power: Sherlock**….
8. …and she sees right through it. **Power: Irene**
9. Irene presents Sherlock with a string of seemingly unrelated numbers and letters that she knows are important. But she does not know how. He quickly figures out they refer to a specific flight. **Power: Sherlock**
10. And she sends the information on to Moriarty. **Power: Irene**
11. He finally figures out her passcode because he actually measured her attraction to him via her pulse and dilated pupils. He has the ability to destroy her. She asks "Are you expecting me to beg?" and he says yes ("ASiB" 1:22:07). The dominatrix becomes the dominated. **Power: Sherlock**

All through the episode, the position of the power shifts. The pattern shows us that the way Sherlock has power taken from him is by being so confident in what he has accomplished that he fails to see her next step. On the other hand, Irene only seems to lose power in little ways until the end. Her final downfall being linked to her attraction to Sherlock seems to

illustrate a rather sexist view of this figure. Up until that final reveal, Irene was portrayed as a character that knew how to use her sexuality to her advantage. Most of her intel was a direct result of her knowing "what men like," be they detectives or judges. However, something about Sherlock so affects her that she is unable to keep her cool and collected professional nature. To put it simply, her crush on the boy leads to her losing her hold over some of the most powerful people in the country. It is understandable that this may be problematic for some or even many. In an article for The Guardian, entitled "Is Sherlock Sexist? Steven Moffat's wanton women", Jane Clare Jones puts this annoyance into words:

> More troubling still, Moffat's Adler blatantly fails to outwit Holmes. Despite identifying as a lesbian, her scheme is ultimately undone by her great big girly crush on Sherlock, an irresistible brain-rot that leads her to trash the security she has fought for from the start of the show with a gesture about as sophisticated – or purposeful – as scrawling love hearts on an exercise book. (Jones 3)

Jones is referring to the fact that Adler's pass code for her phone ends up being "I am Sherlocked". This article makes a good point, but then again, Irene could have used his name as her pass code for a joke and assumed it would be his last guess. Regardless of whether this gesture makes Irene a sexist view of a woman, it is undeniable that it takes away some of her power. There is a distinct implication that feeling something akin to love or a crush makes one weak. Sherlock even tells us "sentiment is a defect found on the losing side" ("ASiB" 1:20:12).

The entire concept of love plays a bizarre role in this relationship. When we hear the word love it brings to mind a sense of care between people, be they family or significant others. In romantic relationships, it is easy to assume that sex becomes intertwined with

the idea of love. However, for someone like Irene, love and sex play totally different roles. Her job involves sex, but the personal connections usually associated with love are not there. So, it is a sexual encounter without any romantic obstacles. Then again, the role of a dominatrix is all about power, so that fits into the spectrum as well. Love, sex, and power are three entities that help us try to fully understand what it is Irene and Sherlock feel for one another. Because of her profession, we see an Irene who is deeply involved in sex and power. But that does not mean we have any clue what she might be like in an actual and non-professional relationship. We get clues that she might be gay – such as her friend Kate who seems to be very close to her, and her telling Watson that she is ("ASiB" 55:15). However, she also flirts with Sherlock. So a lot is up in the air about her actual romantic inclinations. It is easy to assume she is genuinely attracted to Sherlock simply based on the way she talks to him. When Sherlock decodes the string of numbers, she does not express awe at his brilliance or give him a congratulatory high five. She says "I would have you right here on this desk until you begged for mercy twice" ("ASiB"1:08:14-1:08:17). It sounds like a come on, and right in front of John. But, at this point, it seems that *everything* Irene says is planned and calculated to elicit some sort of response. When she first meets John and Sherlock she informs them that, "I like detective stories and detectives. Brainy is the new sexy" ("ASiB" 26:49-26:51). It is all designed to draw in Sherlock. Or, in the case of telling him what she would do to him, to knock him off-balance a bit. But one could argue that it is all bravado, that it is all planned dialogue. So, we are left with two options. She is either A) completely fabricating an attraction to him or B) actually sexually attracted to Sherlock Holmes and just sharing her true feelings. It appears that it should be a "one or the other" kind of deal, but can she not be both? The way Sherlock determines her attraction to him is

through involuntary biological processes – her pulse quickens when he touches her and her pupils dilate. It is completely possible that Irene did not even realize how deep her attraction the detective was. Perhaps somewhere along the way, in the tradition of every makeover romantic comedy ever, the cool and collected beauty fell for the awkward and nerdy detective. If this is the case, Irene manages to bring sex, love, and power together into one character**.** She uses her sexuality to gain power over Sherlock, but love might be an unintentional side effect. And it seems to us that that side effect helps her lose her higher ground.

The final scene also leaves us questioning whether Irene really does dominate in this adaptation. John learns from Mycroft that Irene was beheaded by a terrorist cell. Her decides instead to tell Sherlock that she had gone into hiding to keep herself safe from any enemies. Sherlock does not seem upset. However, what John does not know is that in the moments before she is executed, Irene sends a text to Sherlock telling him goodbye. As the sword is raised above Irene's head, we hear the too familiar sigh of his ringtone. She looks up into the blue eyes of her "executioner" and he tells her to run on his cue. Tears come to her eyes and we know that she is saved. So, in her final moments on screen, the dominatrix truly becomes a damsel in distress who requires the saving skills of Sherlock Holmes. From the canon, we had learned that Irene does not fit this stereotypical woman figure. Does this mean that the BBC adaptation is not faithful in its portrayal of Irene? Is it wrong and even disheartening to see her not triumph over the great detective? Perhaps it would be. Jane Clare Jones certainly thinks so: "But for those of us crazies who like to think that women are, y'know, just regular human beings, it [the execution scene] was politically, really quite regressive" (Jones 3). However, there is reason to believe that this Irene does dominate,

even if she requires rescue. The very final moment of the episode shows Sherlock holding the infamous phone and chuckling to himself as he repeats the phrase "The Woman". Irene's hold on him is apparent in this moment and we see that she did ultimately dominate his mind. In fact, a future episode has her appearing naked in his mind palace as he tries to solve a case ("The Sign of Three"). He obviously holds her in regard and cared enough to save her, yet we still are left with the impression that it is not a romantic connection. So, the final question: What makes her dominant in this situation? Doyle's Irene was able to pull a fast one on Holmes because she represented a future that even the very modern detective could not see. The BBC's Irene is similar in a way. It is all about seeing ahead. The fact that she was able to stay two steps ahead of Sherlock up until the end puts her on an intellectual plane that is equal to his own. The fact that it is a woman outsmarting him is less shocking in a modern adaptation; it is more simply the fact that *anyone* can outthink Sherlock for any period of time. Up until Irene, Moriarty is the only other figure who could hold a candle to the brilliance of Sherlock. But she is able to anticipate his moves and see even farther ahead than he can. And much like in the canon, we see that, although she may sometimes seem to be a typical woman figure, there is more to her than that. This is once again because Irene is a woman who pushes the boundaries of what is expected of her. The end result is a dominatrix who truly dominates the detective.

CBS' *Elementary* – The Detective and His One True Love

When it was first announced, *Elementary* prompted much discussion due to its decision to feature Lucy Liu as a female Watson. This, however, would not be the only

massive alteration the writers would make when adapting and modernizing Doyle's characters. Before looking at how Irene is portrayed in this television show, there is one crucial element to address [spoilers ahead]. On *Elementary,* Irene Adler and Moriarty are revealed to be one and the same. This fact would seem to make discussing Irene without discussing Moriarty very difficult; the show, however, makes the distinctions very clear. Actress Natalie Dormer is listed as one or the other character depending on which episode we are discussing, so, it is possible to look at Irene on her own. And this Irene provides an interesting image because while, like her predecessors, she has a control over Sherlock Holmes, this time, it is more related to an emotional hold.

The flesh and blood Irene Adler does not appear until the third to last episode of Season One of *Elementary* – "Risk Management". Even with her limited screen time, however, the character of Irene is still able to establish dominance over Sherlock Holmes. In the very first episode, Watson had determined that there was a woman in Sherlock's past who turned him into the man he is today:

> S: In case you hadn't noticed, I don't have meaningful connections. Why are you smiling?
>
> J: Because now I know it was a woman.
>
> S: What makes you say that?
>
> J: You're trying too hard. Just like you were the other day with that tattooed lady. All that 'sex is repellant' crap. You can connect to other people. It just frightens you. ("Pilot" 37:56-38:31)

Earlier in the episode, viewers were shown that this Sherlock has no aversions to sex, but sees it as utilitarian. He claimed that it was "repellant. All those fluids and odd sounds. But

my brain and my body require it to function at optimal levels" ("Pilot" 4:44-4:50). Clearly this Sherlock gets something out of sex that Doyle and the BBC's Holmes do not. He views it as a necessity, but even that is unusual for a Holmes But Watson believes that his blasé attitude towards sex stems from some sort of failed relationship with a woman. She surmises that there was some very important woman in Sherlock's life, but he is not forthcoming with the details. Revisiting this episode once we know the name Irene, it becomes clear to the audience that she is the woman responsible for making Sherlock into a man of few serious connections.

Before we see her, though, we learn that Irene is, in a way, responsible for even more than that. At the start of the series, it is explained that Sherlock and Watson come together out of his need for a sober companion to help him recover from his heroin addiction. Right away, Watson had deduced that Sherlock's lack of strong bonds came from a bad experience with a woman. However, we learn that this same woman is also linked to his drug use.

> S: I won't bore you with the details of our courtship. Suffice it to say, I was quite smitten. Up until that point in my life, I'd found most women quite boring – a, uh, perfumed and pillowy means to a physiological end. Irene was different.
>
> W: You were in love.
>
> S: Prior to her murder, my drug use had been recreational. Something to do when I was bored or in need of a boost during a particularly challenging investigation. After Irene, well, I lost control. ("M" 21:25-21:57)

Throughout the season, viewers, learn that Sherlock believes a killer named Moriarty is responsible for murdering his beloved Irene. It is her death that sets into motion Sherlock's

drug problem. In this exchange with Watson, we learn that though this Sherlock is more sexually charged than other incarnations, he is not necessarily more prone to forging strong emotional ties. Except with Irene. When Watson points out that what made her different was that Sherlock was in love, the detective quickly moves on to a different subject. He brings up his drug use and how it took a drastic turn for the worst after losing Irene. Perhaps he is comfortable admitting her superiority to other women he had known, but using the word "love" feels too strong. Regardless, there is something about this Irene Adler that sets her above all other women to which Sherlock had been linked. Where Doyle's Adler outsmarted Holmes and *Sherlock*'s Irene physically dominated him, this Irene is the love of his life. Her hold is a romantic one. Not only that, but her importance is increased when you realize that her "death" leads to his addiction which in turn leads to his meeting Watson. Irene is a sort of catalyst for the creation of the famed pair.

Because Irene physically enters the picture so late, we do not get to see Watson react to her all that much. However, there is one interaction between Watson and Sherlock that connects the two women in his life. Sherlock tells Watson:

> When I pursued Moran, my entire life I had made one meaningful connection. That was with Irene Adler. You were preparing to take on a new client, I had every reason to believe that I would be returning to the solitary methods of old. Since then we've entered into a partnership. It's an arrangement which I find very rewarding. You're and interesting project and I enjoy watching you progress. The thing that's different about me, empirically speaking, is you. ("A Landmark Story 23:27-24:05).

Joan Watson is the second meaningful connection in Sherlock's life and he puts it on the same level as his romantic relationship with Irene Adler. Our ears might perk up at this

comparison and assume that it implies the potential for a romantic connection between Watson and Sherlock. I think, however, that it is more the reverse, that this comparison is used to highlight the importance of Irene Adler. After all, the name Watson is universally paired with Holmes. By showing that Watson is not the first to come along and change Sherlock's life, it drives home how important Irene Adler really was.

Finally, in Episode 22, we get a picture of Irene herself. Watson points out that although Sherlock mentions what happened to Irene, he never talks about what she was like as a person. True to Doyle's creation, this Irene is an American[29]. Instead of an opera singer, though, she is a different kind of artist:

> S: She was an exquisite painter. She made her living restoring Renaissance paintings for art museums. She traveled extensively because of her work. She was highly intelligent, optimistic about the human condition…I usually consider it a sign of stupidity but with Irene, it seemed oddly convincing. She was, to me, the woman. To me, she eclipsed and predominated the whole of her gender. She's the only one I ever…and the sex…I learned things, Watson, me, and that hasn't happened before. ("Risk Management" 8:30-9:45)

Her being an artist seems to set Irene up as a counter to Sherlock's cool, intellectual self. She is more creative, but not unintelligent, and something about her makes her optimism appealing to Sherlock. To hear those famous descriptors, straight from Doyle's story, come out of Sherlock's mouth makes them even more powerful than if Watson were narrating it. Once again, Sherlock stops himself from using the word "love". All of his actions and descriptions and his total devastation at her death add up to her being the love of his life,

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[29] Though Sherlock "held it against her only briefly" ("Risk Management" 8:35)

but that word does not pass his lips. So, we finally have a description of this woman – the woman – and, at the end of the episode, we get out first look. After solving a particular case put to him by Moriarty, Sherlock is rewarded with an address. Walking through the house, he and Watson come upon a room full of paintings that are immediately familiar to Sherlock. As he walks through a room full of Irene's works, Sherlock shows the most emotion that he has exhibited yet in the season. His eyes well up and his lower lip trembles before he finally sees her and collapses ("Risk Management" 42:00). This Sherlock proves that he is not an automaton when he is faced with the possibility of seeing this all-important woman again. Her hold on him is made clear by the severity of his reaction.

We learn that Irene was being held and psychologically tormented by a man known as Mr. Stapleton[30]. As she goes through recovery, Irene is a shell of the vibrant woman we get to see through flashbacks. Once again, we have someone who illustrates both sides of a woman's personality: she is strong-willed and sexy but also in need of protection. Through the flashback to Sherlock and Irene's first meeting, we suddenly understand what it is that makes her stand out so much to the detective. When he meets her, it is to ask whether certain pieces are forgeries, she informs him that they are.

> I: They're supposed to be studies for *The Fighting Temeraire* but they have a medium orange and ocher in them. In 1839, you needed turmeric to make ocher paint. But 1839 was also the beginning of your Afghan War. The army commandeered turmeric for a preservative in rations. That's why you don't see ocher in *The Fighting Temeraire*. Or any painting from back then.
>
> S: Hmmm. I'm surprised I hadn't realized that…yet. ("The Woman" 2:38-2:42)

[30] Brief shout-out to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

In their very first meeting, Irene proves herself to be someone who thinks an awful lot like Holmes. Her reasoning skills and use of logic are very strong and completely off-put the detective. She states it all so matter-of-factly and he is left trying to save face by pointing out that he would have come to that conclusion eventually. She appeals to him because she is unlike anyone else he has met: she can challenge him. He gets a chance to regain his upper-footing when he points out that she has an original painting hanging on her wall. Yet again, we have an Irene committing crimes, but not for profit. . She has no plans to sell the painting, she simply wants to see that it is treated well. Similarly, this is another Irene who pushes boundaries in some way – the art restorer turned thief and forger. Sherlock says he can tell her which paintings are reproductions and when he succeeds he will take her out for an evening in London. She has other ideas:

> I've already told you that you're beautiful and I see the way you're looking at me. Why would we need to leave this apartment to enjoy each other's company? ("The Woman" 5:45)

Another recurring trend with modern Irenes is their use of sexuality to entice the great detective. Here, Sherlock is not caught off guard and simply refers to it as "a game with proper stakes". Clearly, there is a sexual attraction between the two characters. However, the initial attraction for Sherlock comes when he realizes that this woman can give him an intellectual run for his money. After she has re-entered his life, Sherlock tells Irene that, "you're the only person I ever empathized with" ("The Woman" 27:22). She is his kindred spirit, his equal. She is the only person to whom he can relate.

However, their "love" is not without its downsides. In another flashback, we see Irene and Sherlock lying naked in bed while he reviews and tells her about a case he is working on – a killer named Moriarty. As they lay there, he looks at her back and sees birthmarks he had never noticed before. This prompts him to realize that "even after all this time, you're something of a blind spot to me" ("The Woman" 25:28). As in other incarnations, this Irene is someone who ultimately is unreadable to Sherlock, someone he does not fully understand. Irene may be very similar to him and on his level intellect-wise, but she is also mysterious to him, which only seems to increase her appeal. When she is found, Sherlock realizes that the real obstacle to their relationship is that she will always be available as a pawn to use against him:

> S: He [Moriarty] wants me to understand that as long as you're in my life, you can and will be used against me. You are one of the strongest people I have ever met, but next to a will and a mind like Moriarty's, you are weak. And because I care for you, I'm also weak. That is why I need to let you go. ("The Woman" 31:55-32:15)

The BBC's Sherlock told us that "caring is not an advantage" – and so it would appear on *Elementary* as well. Once again, love is tied up with weakness, although this time the weakness is on Sherlock's end. By allowing himself to care so much about another person, Sherlock automatically provides any enemy with the means to unravel him. Thinking that he had lost Irene for good led to a complete downward spiral into the world of addiction. Having Irene back, puts him at the mercy of a horrifying murderer who will not hesitate to take her away for real. This woman, Irene Adler, has the ability to cause the complete downfall of the great Sherlock Holmes, and not just because she happens to moonlight as his nemesis. Though we actually see her very little, this Irene proves her power over

Sherlock Holmes by the mere fact that being with her, losing her, and gaining her back, all contribute to making Sherlock into the person he is. Without the loss of Irene, Sherlock would not have a bar to measure personal connection against. Without the loss of Irene, Sherlock would not have found himself in a position where he required someone like Watson. Without getting Irene back, Sherlock would not have realized so fully how to love and let go. She shapes him and challenges him and that is why CBS's Irene Adler is able to have control over Sherlock Holmes.

Chapter Three

The Problem of the Villain:
In Which Moriarty is Not Holmes' Polar Opposite, but the Yin to His Yang

"You need me or you're nothing. Because we're just alike, you and I, except you're boring. You're on the side of the angels."
(*Sherlock* "The Reichenbach Fall")

Every good hero, super or otherwise, needs a villain. Throughout the canon and subsequent adaptations, Sherlock Holmes has shown himself to be associated with uncommon variations of common characters found in the hero's story. Watson is so much more than his sidekick. Irene is more complicated than the usual leading lady. So it would make sense that his one true enemy, Moriarty, would prove to be different from what we would expect in a villain. Indeed, he proves himself to be much closer to his heroic counterpart than is perhaps comfortable for readers or viewers. In Doyle's stories, we see a master criminal who is remarkably similar to Holmes himself. In the BBC's *Sherlock*, we get a similar comparison, with even more attention given to the game played between the two men. *Elementary* might have a gender divide between its Sherlock and Moriarty, but that does not stop the characters from sharing many qualities. What is made clear to us as readers and as an audience is that Moriarty represents the kind of man Holmes could easily have become. And since crime is present in all times and places, he is character who easily shifts settings and takes over as the criminal mastermind du jour.

Doyle's Canon: Where the Criminal and Detective are Uncomfortably Alike

Before looking closely at the character of Moriarty in Doyle's stories, it is important to keep in mind one fact: Moriarty was supposed to be the end of Sherlock Holmes. If Doyle had gotten his way, the detective would never have returned from his tumble over Reichenbach Falls. In 1893, Doyle published "The Final Problem," and expected that to be the last Sherlock Holmes story. Readers, however, were not at all inclined to accept this, even going so far as to don black armbands in mourning for the fictional detective, and Doyle soon resurrected Holmes. Nevertheless, Moriarty was supposed to be Holmes' last adversary, and that detail is crucial because it tells readers that the former was truly meant to be a match for the great detective.

Though Moriarty is mentioned in stories that come after "The Final Problem," his introduction comes within that story. After an extended separation due to Watson's occasionally-appearing wife, Holmes and his former flat mate reunite in time for the detective to share his difficulties with master criminal Moriarty. After detailing Moriarty's nefarious accolades, Holmes explains to Watson that he has a scheme to put Moriarty and his entire gang behind bars. After this grand bust, the consulting detective intends to retire happily. According to plan, Holmes and Watson board a train to Switzerland ahead of Moriarty. Upon arrival, the companions walk up to Reichenbach Falls, where Watson receives a letter from their hotel, requesting his immediate presence to help with a medical emergency. He rushes back, but the emergency was not real, merely a ruse to separate him from Holmes. Watson returns to Reichenbach Falls, only to find his companion gone. In a rare moment of deductive prowess, Watson determines that Holmes and Moriarty must have tumbled over the falls together to their deaths. Upon closer inspection of the scene,

Watson finds a letter addressed to him in Holmes' bag. It tells him how it all played out, and Watson is left mourning his closest friend. Thus ends the illustrious career, and life, of Sherlock Holmes - that is, until Doyle brings him back in "The Adventure of the Empty House".

To better understand Professor James[31] Moriarty, we look at him in relation to Holmes himself. The most notable difference between these men is the fact that one is a detective and one is a criminal, indeed, the king of criminals. According to Holmes:

> He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. …is there a crime to be done, a paper to be abstracted, we will say, a house to be rifled, a man to be removed – the word is passed to the professor, the matter is organized and carried out. (Doyle *Complete Sherlock Holmes Volume 2 (CSH)* 471)

Moriarty is so much more than a simple criminal; he controls the other criminals of the city. His methods of running this organization highlight another difference between Holmes and Moriarty: their modes of getting the job done. Over the course of the canon, Holmes proves himself to be a very active and physical detective. He is hands-on, going to the scenes of the crimes and tracking down suspects, donning disguises and moving among the citizens of London in order to solve his cases. On the other hand, we have Moriarty, who "sits

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[31] If that is in fact his real first name. His Colonel brother seems to share the moniker (Doyle *CSH* 469). So that should tell you how much Doyle paid attention to details like the names of his characters.

motionless" while controlling the actions of others. In this way, he proves to be more similar to that other Holmes boy, Mycroft. Back in "The Greek Interpreter," Holmes describes his older brother in a way that explains why he was not also a detective:

> [Holmes] I said that he was my superior in observation and deduction. If the art of the detective began and ended in reasoning from an armchair, my brother would be the greatest criminal agent that ever lived. But he has no ambition and no energy. (Doyle *CSH* 436)

According to the younger Holmes brother, a great detective cannot be someone who refuses to go out and get his answers. Based on the Moriarty model of criminal activity, however, one can become highly successful simply by remaining still and having others do the leg work.

When it comes to the villainy of Moriarty, Doyle lets his readers know that such inclinations are inherited. Holmes says "But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers" (Doyle *CSH* 470-71). Doyle appears to be telling us that criminal nature is a genetic trait. In fact, it was not an uncommon belief at the time that physical characteristics pointed to a proclivity for crime. Cesare Lombroso, an Italian criminologist in the nineteenth century, put forward the idea that crime was a trait of human nature. He also focused on the use of physiognomy, a way of indentifying criminals by their physical features. His book, *Criminal Man*, puts into words these beliefs:

> Those who have read this far should be persuaded that criminals resemble savages and the colored races. These three groups have many characteristics in common,

> including thinness of body hair, low degrees of strength and below-average weight, small cranial capacities, sloping foreheads, and swollen sinuses. Members of both groups frequently have sutures of the central brow ridge, precocious synostes or disarticulation of the frontal bones, upwardly arching temporal bones, sutural simplicity, thick skulls, overdeveloped jaws and cheekbones, oblique eyes, dark skin, thick and curly hair, and jug ears. (Lombroso 91)

Obviously, Lombroso's conclusions are dated and racist, and would be recognized today as racial profiling. What stands, though, out is the specificity with which Lombroso describes this class of person, the clearly described physical attributes that are singled out as identifiers. By Lombroso's logic, simply looking at Moriarty should raise some red flags; he may be a white man of Irish descent, but he should possess physical traits that identify him as a criminal. But we will learn that Moriarty does *not* have these physically criminal traits. People should be able to look at him and see that he is evil, but blood is not visible and his criminality is hereditary.

Along with Moriarty's dangerously criminal genetics, he sets himself apart from the detective by being a professor of mathematics while Holmes is first identified as a chemist. This might seem like a subtle distinction; for someone who is more versed in the literary side of academics, math and science seem to go hand in hand as the talents of those left-brained thinkers. But when trying to parse out what separates Holmes from Moriarty, their fields help provide more insight. As previously mentioned, Holmes is the more active of the pair, while Moriarty is much more sedentary. Appropriately, chemistry requires the experimenter to mix formulas, to identify compounds, to create physical tests in order to reach conclusions. Mathematics, on the other hand, is a much more internal study; any

work not done within the brain is usually carried out on paper, requiring more writing and less need for a Bunsen burner. Holmes' scientific interests also prove helpful in his chosen career, for example, enabling him to devise a test to identify the presence of blood at a crime scene. Moriarty's math expertise is perhaps useful when it comes time to carry out his criminal accounting, but the skills do not necessarily lend themselves to his running of a crime network.

The concrete differences between Holmes and Moriarty are few and far between; our short time with the criminal is much more useful in pointing out to readers just how similar he is to the detective. First of all, these men seem to come from comparable backgrounds. True, we know very little about Holmes' childhood, or even about his family. In fact, Watson is utterly shocked to discover the existence of Mycroft (Doyle *CSH* 435). But one can assume, based on the fact that Mycroft is an important member of government and that both were obviously well-educated, that the Holmes boys were born into a fairly comfortable family. The same is the case for Moriarty (and perhaps two other brothers, also named James; the canon is unclear in this regard). In his description of Moriarty, Holmes mentions that he is "of good birth and excellent education" (Doyle *CSH* 470). Perhaps this would not be a surprising similarity if it were not for the previously mentioned fact that Moriarty's criminal tendencies are viewed as hereditary. Along with the notion that criminals displayed certain physical features, the Victorian era also had certain ideas about what became known as "the criminal class". In an article in the *Journal of British Studies* entitled "Identity, Language, and Resistance in the Making of the Victorian 'Criminal Class': Mayhew's Convict Revisited," A.L. Beier defines this class of person:

> There is widespread agreement that the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw the articulation of a concept of a "criminal class" – a group of offenders allegedly drawn to crime because of moral degeneracy rather than being drawn to it by their material circumstances. They were "the marginal people among the urban poor – the vagrants, street-folk, prostitutes, and thieves," and they were perceived to constitute "the main danger to the social and moral order" in the period. (Beier 1)

The so-called "criminal class" is directly related to a certain kind of people: degenerates, people living on the fringes of society who turn to a life of crime. It would not be at all uncommon to find a man living on the street who turned into a pickpocket, or a woman turned into a prostitute. But a man of good birth, a professor who becomes the head of a massive crime organization? That is little more unheard of, and something that sets Moriarty apart. Which leads us to ask many questions, including, how a man can be considered to be of good birth while also having a hereditary criminal strain in his blood? But what is important here is that Holmes and Moriarty seem to be from the same stock, despite all evidence that such a thing should be rare. Men of good breeding should not become the Napoleons of crime. The fact that Moriarty does shows that the path is possible.

This is not to say that a high class or educated criminal was unheard of at the time. Five years before Doyle published "The Final Problem," London was gripped by fear. From August to November of that year, a man known only as Jack the Ripper brutally murdered at least five women of ill repute. These murders took place in the Whitechapel district, a part of London's East End. The East End held a fascination for the higher classes of London because it was known to be full of criminals – prostitutes, thieves, and murderers. Given

the nature of his victims, it would be easy to assume that Jack the Ripper was of a similar ilk. Yet, speculation about the Ripper's identity told a different story. One thing that made the Ripper's crimes so horrific was the fact that he removed organs from his victims. While brutal and crude, the precision with which these organs were removed strongly implied that the killer had a background in medical education. According to casebook.org, a site devoted to the mystery surrounding Jack the Ripper, there was strong speculation that a member of the royal family might have even been the killer:

> Prince Albert Victor Christian Edward (known as "Eddy" to his friends) is one of the most famous suspects in the Jack the Ripper case, figuring in no less than three major theories. (http://www.casebook.org/suspects/eddy.html)

The prince's involvement has since been rethought, but the fact remains that it seemed perfectly possible that an educated man or even a very high-class man could be a serial killer. In the case of Jack the Ripper, we see crimes being committed in the "bad" part of town. But we also see the strong possibility that the criminal may come from the better parts of society. So it is not such a huge stretch to believe that an educated and upper class man like Moriarty might become the greatest criminal of all time.

Earlier, it was mentioned that Moriarty should possess the facial features of a criminal; the tendency for crime is in his blood and should be written on his face. Yet, when we finally get a physical description of Moriarty from Holmes, something strange is going on:

> His appearance was quite familiar to me. He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head. He is clean-shaven, pale, and ascetic-looking, retaining something of the professor in his

> features. His shoulders are rounded from much study, and his face protrudes forward and is forever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion. (Doyle *CSH* 472)

When Moriarty first shows up at Holmes' flat, the detective appears to practicing his own physiognomy. That first line in particular is striking, because Moriarty's appearance is familiar to *us* as well:

> 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 torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. (Doyle *CSH* 20)

We have heard a similar physical description when Watson described Holmes. Is that why Moriarty's appearance is familiar to Holmes? Both men are tall and thin, and both have eyes of note, one sharp, the other sunken. Then, we have the fact that Moriarty is compared to a reptile where Holmes is frequently referred to as being hawk-like. Hawks eat snakes, snakes eat eggs. Even in their physical forms, the two men are set up as worthy adversaries, down to a natural level. The fact that Holmes and Moriarty look so similar and that Moriarty is believed to be a genetically pre-disposed criminal connects these men in a bizarre and rather unsavory way.

It is possible that Doyle is alluding to the Victorian notion of "the double". This idea had to do with the belief that out there in the world exists another person who looks just like you but acts very differently. More often than not, this doppelganger would be an evil version of its reflection. This concept is taken to its extreme in *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and*

Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson. In that story, the good and evil side of the personality existed within one man, Henry Jekyll. By using a formula, he was able to have his evil side manifest in a completely different personality. In his statement about the events, Jekyll writes:

> Even as good shone upon the countenance of the one, evil was written broadly and plainly on the face of the other…And yet when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance, rather a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself. It seemed natural and human…This, as I take it, was because all human beings, as we meet them, are commingled out of good and evil. (Stevenson 51)

Even though Hyde simply *looks* evil, Jekyll is able to recognize something of himself in Hyde's face. In doing so, he acknowledges that all men have the potential to be good or evil. This idea of the double seems to apply to Holmes and Moriarty. Since these two men look so alike but exist on completely different sides of the law – at least superficially – it would make sense for them to be two sides of the same coin. But perhaps it is not so cut and dry.

Yes, the men look alike - but that alone does not mean the hero is just like the villain. After all, Moriarty is a man who spins a web full of criminal activity and has a network of shady characters. Then again, so does Holmes. Early on in the canon, in *The Sign of Four,* readers are introduced to Holmes' Baker Street Irregulars. Watson describes their arrival as "a swift pattering of naked feet upon the stairs," and the boys in question as "a dozen dirty and ragged little street Arabs" with a leader who "stood forward with an air of lounging superiority which was very funny in such a disreputable little scarecrow" (Doyle *CSH* 126) "Dirty," "ragged," "disreputable" – these are the words Watson uses to describe a group of boys whom Holmes frequently employs for help on cases. In order to catch

criminals, Holmes has no qualms about engaging the assistance of poor little boys who, by Victorian standards, seem to be one step away from thieves themselves. To a man like Holmes, who does not recognize traditional social values and mores, people are people. Little ragged street urchins are as valuable a resource as any when seeking clues. Similarly, a woman like Irene Adler is not to be dismissed simply because of her gender. Holmes does not seem to distinguish between his class and gender and that of others – it is simply him and everyone else. In that way, he finds himself interacting with "disreputable" figures similar to the ones we can presume Moriarty hires to do his dirty work.

The similarities do not stop there. We also might point to the chosen disciplines of the men- math and science - and assume that they show us a disparity in the way they reason; yet their ways of thinking are virtually identical. Holmes describes Moriarty as "a genius, a philosopher, and abstract thinker" - adjectives that could be applied to Holmes as well (Doyle *CSH* 471). Both men think very far outside the box, and have no issue with doing things that no other person would ever imagine. Moriarty sits in the center of his web and commands the carrying out of various types of heinousness; however, in his own way, Holmes says and does all manner of unseemly things. In "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton," Holmes woos and becomes engaged to Milverton's housemaid simply so that he can obtain information about the blackmailer (Doyle *CSH* 575-76). In "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle." Holmes and Watson decide *not* to tell the police about a jewel thief (Doyle *CSH* 257). On many occasions, Holmes places himself outside the jurisdiction of the police. He may consult for them, but he is not one of them, and is therefore not restricted by their rules. And a man without rules can easily turn into a man who fancies himself so above the law that he will never be convicted of any crime, like

Moriarty. This potential for Holmes to become an amazing criminal does not go unnoticed by his companion, who writes:

> So swift, silent, and furtive were his movements, like those of a trained bloodhound picking out a scent, that I could not but think what a terrible criminal he would have made had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law instead of exerting them in its defence. (Doyle *CSH* 112)

Watson sees what a small step it would take for Holmes to become the most brilliant of wrongdoers. It is purely by choice that Holmes is not giving Moriarty competition for the title of London's most illustrious criminal mastermind. But, reading Watson's thoughts, one cannot help but imagine what it would be like to have Holmes as a bad guy – and that seems to be where Moriarty fits in: he is the "evil twin" to Holmes' "good twin". When Watson asks what Moriarty's next move will be as they head to Switzerland, Holmes tells him that he will do "what I [Holmes] should do" (Doyle *CSH* 476). Holmes is able to predict Moriarty's every single move simply because they are the actions he himself would take.

When we think of Holmes, Watson's name naturally follows. Holmes is a man with a singular companion who works by his side. In "The Final Problem," Moriarty has no equivalent to Watson. When Holmes is revealed to have survived at Reichenbach in "The Adventure of the Empty House", Moriarty's sidekick suddenly appears within the canon: Colonel Sebastian Moran. The man in question is caught trying to assassinate Holmes after committing another high profile murder. After the police take him into custody, Holmes and Watson discuss Moran, the latter expressing shock that Moran's "career is that of an honourable soldier" (Doyle *CSH* 494). Holmes creates a metaphor for good men gone bad – "There are some trees, Watson, which grow to a certain height. And then suddenly develop

some unsightly eccentricity" (Doyle *CSH* 494). This belief that a man can show signs of honor, but then have undesirable qualities emerge parallels Moriarty's being born into a good family yet being unable to resist his hereditary criminality. It makes sense, then, that Moran gets picked up by Moriarty and acts as his "chief of the staff" (Doyle *CSH* 494). We have an accomplished military man who crosses paths with the most brilliant criminal in all of London: Moran is Moriarty's Watson. He is the soldier, the brawn, while Moriarty is the brains. Other authors have explored this parallelism. In the novel *Moriarty of the d'Urbervilles*, for example, Kim Newman re-imagines the famous cases but from the other side of the moral line, with Sebastian Moran serving as narrator. Even more striking, in my opinion, is a short story by Neil Gaiman entitled "A Study in Emerald"[32]. The story begins:

> I had been in need of lodgings. That was how I met him. I wanted someone to share the cost of rooms with me. We were introduced by a mutual acquaintance, in the chemical laboratories of St. Bart's. "You've been in Afghanistan, I perceive," that was what he said to me, and my mouth fell open and my eyes opened very wide. (Gaiman 1)

The narrator goes on to express shock at the deduction, and the new acquaintance explains just how he did it. This opening scene and the following story read just like *A Study in Scarlet*[33]. The characters are never named, but the interactions perfectly match those between the newly acquainted Holmes and Watson. Yet, at a certain point, the narrator's detective friend describes the murderers they are looking for as "a tall man and a limping doctor" (Gaiman 19). Suddenly, everything is thrown into question: those suspects sound an awful lot like Holmes and Watson. If they *are* Holmes and Watson, whom have we been

[32] Found in the collection *Fragile Things*
[33] With some alien overlords thrown in.

following throughout the story? That question is answered when our mysterious narrator signs off at the story's end with the initials "S.M". Just like that, the reader realizes that they have been rooting for Moriarty and Moran to solve the case. Of course, this story is not a part of Doyle's canon, and perhaps not how Moriarty and Moran met. However, what Gaiman does with this story is show us just how similar the two pairs are: the soldier and genius, the brawn and the brains, the biographer and the subject.

Sherlock Holmes might have been outfoxed by Irene Adler and he might not have successfully protected some of his clients[34], but only one figure ever proves an equal match for him. When Holmes describes Moriarty to Watson, it is with a tone of appreciation, even respect. He says, "…I was forced to confess that I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal. My horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration at his skill" (Doyle *CSH* 471). The fact that Holmes considers Moriarty to be his "intellectual equal" is high praise from a man who presumes himself to be a superior brain to all others around him. Whenever he speaks of Moriarty after the incident at the Falls, the man is always used as a bar against which to measure other adversaries. In "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client", Holmes tells said client "If your man is more dangerous than the late Professor Moriarty, or than the living Colonel Sebastian Moran, then he is indeed worth meeting" (Doyle *CSH* 985). Moriarty and even Moran become the most dangerous men in the world to Holmes. In fact, he remarks that, "London has become a singularly uninteresting city since the death of the late lamented Professor Moriarty" (Doyle *CSH* 496). Holmes actually mourns the loss of such a criminal. Perhaps this is because having him perish was a much less satisfying ending to their saga than being able to put the man behind bars. In any case,

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[34] For example, "The Five Orange Pips" and "The Valley of Fear".

there is something about this man that makes him the most interesting and worthy adversary Holmes ever encounters. Even when Watson is imagining how their final confrontation played out at Reichenbach Falls, he acknowledges that "it ended, as it could hardly fail to end in such a situation, in their reeling over, locked in each other's arms…the most dangerous criminal and the foremost champion of the law of their generation" (Doyle *CSH* 480). "The Final Problem" is full of intimations that, to quote Harry Potter, "neither can live while the other survives."[35] They must both go down together over those falls. The only way Holmes' survival can be explained is by the fact that Moriarty suddenly goes against every aspect of his character. In "The Adventure of the Empty House" Holmes explains that "he [Moriarty] drew no weapon, but he rushed at me and threw his long arms around me" (Doyle *CSH* 486). Moriarty was a man who always thought things through, just like Holmes; but, in that moment, he simply acted on animal instinct and tackled Holmes. He was supposed to die *with* Holmes, not on his own because he acted on an impulse. If people had not protested the death of Sherlock Holmes so vehemently, the greatest detective would have perished, entwined with the darker version of himself, the yin to his crime-fighting yang. That, indeed, would have been poetic justice, if unpopular with fans. Instead, because master criminals are timeless, we see Moriarty adapted alongside Holmes in television shows where it is still a possibility that the men will destroy each other.

BBC's *Sherlock*: The Thin Line Between the Psychopath and Sociopath

The first season of *Sherlock* leads up to the meeting between Sherlock and Moriarty. In "A Study in Pink", a murderous cabbie reveals the name of the man who hired him:

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[35] *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 841

Moriarty. In "The Blind Banker", a murderous acrobat is seen communicating with her Moriarty before his sniper takes her out. The name keeps coming up in connection with crimes, and Sherlock is suitably intrigued at the prospect of meeting such a brilliant criminal mind. The season finale has Moriarty contacting Sherlock through a series of hostages and having him solve cases within an allotted amount of time. The episode is entitled "The Great Game" and it is just that: a battle of wits between Moriarty and Sherlock. When they finally meet at the end of the episode, it is a tense scene that ends with their fates, as well as John's, hanging in the balance. The second season picks up the story there, with Moriarty opting to forgo the murders of Sherlock and John at the promise of something better from Irene. Moriarty's true big moment comes in the second season finale, "The Reichenbach Fall" – a fitting name, no? – in which he works tirelessly to completely discredit Sherlock and make the detective kill himself. In the process of the total takedown, Moriarty ends up being the one to commit a lasting suicide…or so we thought. The most recent season, three, ended with video screens all over London filling up with Moriarty's face, as a voice repeats, "Did you miss me? Did you miss me?" Business between the detective and the criminal mastermind is apparently far from over. For the purposes of this chapter, however, we will look only at the existing character of Moriarty and how he compares to Sherlock, rather than speculating about their *real* final problem.

The first thing to note when looking at Andrew Scott's portrayal of James Moriarty is the fact that his entire relationship with Sherlock seems to be this odd flirtation. The very first words Moriarty says to Sherlock – through the voice of a hostage – are "Hello, sexy" quickly followed by "solve my puzzle Sherlock or I'm going to be so naughty" ("The Great Game" 15:09-15:11 & 16:12-16:14). Though viewers have yet to be introduced to the

dominatrix Irene Adler, this speech sounds like something she would say to her clients. This teasing manner is not something we see within the canon; the BBC adaptation, however reminds us time and again that it is a different world, and open sexual tension or flirtation between people of the same-sex is not uncommon. We see it with Sherlock and John, and in the overwhelming fan tendency to write stories about their perceived romantic relationship. And, we see it in almost every moment between Sherlock and Moriarty. The first time Sherlock claps eyes on Moriarty, the villain is posing as Jim from IT at St. Bart's Hospital, and Molly Hooper's new beau. He acts nervous around the great detective as Sherlock continues to search for clues to solve Moriarty's first puzzle. When Sherlock looks at "Jim," he says one word – "gay". After Jim leaves and Molly demands an explanation, Sherlock points to the product in Jim's hair, his colorful and obvious underwear, and the fact that he left his number for Sherlock himself. When Sherlock later meets Moriarty *as* Moriarty, the latter mentions how fun it was "playing gay." But is he playing? Or, as we discover with Irene, is he just unable to hide his true attraction? He may have been pretending to be gay to throw Sherlock off-guard, but even when he unmasks himself, the flirting is still there. The final showdown at the end of the first season takes place in the pool of a high school, the site of the first murder Moriarty had Sherlock investigate. When he comes face to face with the detective, Moriarty asks," Is that a British army Browning L9A1 in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see me?" to which Sherlock replies, "Both" ("The Great Game" 1:22:00-1:22:09). Moriarty uses a classic line[36], and Sherlock gives as good as he gets. Their rapport is based around this idea of mutual attraction. Regardless of

[36] The line "is that a pistol in your pocket or are you just glad to see me" is supposed to have been said by Mae West in *She Done Him Wrong* (1933). But according to filmsite.org, she did not say it in the film but instead to an L.A. police officer acting as her escort from the train station in 1936.

whether there is a physical or sexual attraction between the two men, one thing is undeniable: in the words of Sherlock, when he acts as witness against Moriarty, they have a "special something": "We met twice, five minutes in total. I pulled a gun and he tried to blow me up I felt we had a special something" ("The Reichenbach Fall" 16:36-16:39). Their admiration for and attraction to one another seems to stem from the well-matched danger each represents to the other. They are locked in a fight to the death, and every minute of it is intriguing.

Before getting to what makes Moriarty and Sherlock so similar in this incarnation first we look at what makes them different – in this case, the difference between "sociopath" and "psychopath". In the very first episode of *Sherlock*, this exchange takes place:

> Anderson: …and we found it in the hands of our favorite psychopath.
>
> Sherlock: I'm not a psychopath, Anderson. I'm a high-functioning sociopath. Do your research. ("A Study in Pink" 57:50-57:56)

These terms are often misunderstood as synonyms, with "psychopath" often having a worse connotation, thanks to characters like Norman Bates. There is, however, an important distinction between the two. In an article entitled "What's the Difference Between A Sociopath And A Psychopath? (Not Much, But One Might Kill You)", Chris Weller attempts to articulate the difference between these terms:

> Both tend to be charming, despite being unable to empathize normally with others. They offer convincing systems of fear and disgust, but tend to lack both. Here's the crux, though: Psychopaths cross the line. Sociopaths may hole up in their houses and remove themselves from society, while a psychopath is busy in his basement rigging

> shackles to his furnace. Psychopaths are dangerous. They're violent and cruel, and oftentimes downright sinister. (Weller)

Sherlock proves how charming he is by the fact that he is able to manipulate women like Molly Hooper into helping him with tasks. But the tendency to lean towards antisocial behavior is even clearer proof of his sociopathic nature. He seems perfectly content to work alone, though he is better with John. More to the point, he often exhibits antisocial behavior in the form of saying inappropriate and hurtful things, whether intentionally or not. For example, when he explains to Molly why Jim from IT is clearly gay, Sherlock genuinely does not understand that what he is saying might be unfeeling. When she leaves, clearly upset, John admonishes Sherlock for being callous, and Sherlock is confused:

> Sherlock: Just saving her time. Isn't that kinder?
>
> John: That? No, no Sherlock that wasn't kind. ("The Great Game" 19:48-19:51)

Time and again, we see Sherlock turn to John for social cues. He is a very brilliant man in many ways, but understanding basic human nature is not one of them. In this way, he often comes off as cruel – but, as he is quick to point out to Anderson, what he is *not* is a psychopath. That term brings violence into the mix. If Sherlock is a high-functioning sociopath, then Moriarty seems to be his psychopathic counterpart.

When playing his "game" with Sherlock, Moriarty has absolutely no compulsions about taking a blind old woman or a little boy hostage if it will make Sherlock dance. He also has no problems killing said old woman and eleven others when she begins to describe him ("The Great Game" 48:10). The interaction between Sherlock and Moriarty at the pool illustrates their difference quite clearly:

> Sherlock: People have died.

Moriarty: That's what people DO! ("The Great Game" 1:24:08-1:24:10)

Sherlock may not understand how to interact politely with "ordinary people," but he values their lives; Moriarty, on the other hand, sees no problem with wasting them. In the very beginning of the second season, he threatens to skin someone and turn them into shoes ("A Scandal in Belgravia" 2:14-2:22). We most clearly see the difference between the sociopathic Sherlock and the psychopathic Moriarty when looking at Moriarty's quest to discredit Sherlock. In "The Reichenbach Fall," Moriarty plants the seed into people's heads that Sherlock might just be a fraud. He pinpoints Sally Donovan and Anderson as the ones who will first begin to doubt, since they have a shared animosity against Sherlock, and a belief that, one day, he might become dangerous. Moriarty knows how simple it would be to tip them over into believing that Sherlock is a fake. He understands people, and that allows him to do things such as manipulate an entire jury to ensure that he is not arrested for several high profile break-ins. Moriarty can be charming to people, he just does not care about them. His disregard for human lives makes him dangerous. On the other hand Sherlock does not empathize with people at all, but he will try to save them.

Moriarty's psychopathic tendencies do not preclude him from being civilized, like Doyle's original creation. As he stands, ready to kill Sherlock and John at the start of the second season, Moriarty's phone begins to ring, and he asks, "Do you mind if get that?" as his BeeGees ringtone echoes around the pool ("A Scandal in Belgravia" 1:52). He might be a massively powerful criminal who will stop at nothing to ruin Sherlock, but he always minds his manners. Even when he is carrying out his break-in at the Tower of London, he does so like another well-known "civilized psychopath." Moriarty puts in his earbuds and dances around the room containing the crown jewels, before breaking the glass and climbing onto

the throne while the music crescendos. This immediately brings to mind an iconic film scene from Stanley Kubrick's 1971 adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange*, where viewers see the protagonist/antagonist,[37] Alex, savagely beat a man and his wife, destroy their home, and prepare to rape the woman, all while singing "Singin' in the Rain". (*A Clockwork Orange* 11:12-13:17). Alex and Moriarty may be criminals and they may be violent and dangerous, but they are not without culture; they can appreciate the finer things in life like a symphony or a musical.

Just as in Doyle's original story, the BBC's Sherlock and Moriarty are actually more alike than different. While these similarities are mentioned and made clear in the canon, the television show makes them crucial to all interactions between the two. First of all, we have the idea that Moriarty has been a part of Sherlock's life and career for a very long time. The first puzzle Moriarty gives to Sherlock involves solving the murder of a schoolboy named Carl Powers. His death occurred while Sherlock himself was in school, and inspired the young Holmes to become a detective when he realized that there had to be more to the case than the police realized. When he solves Carl's murder in the present day, Moriarty's message via hostage involves him saying:

> Clever you, guessing about Carl Powers. I never liked him. Carl laughed at me, so I stopped him laughing. ("The Great Game" 28:40-28:52)

This strongly implies that it was Moriarty who killed Carl, or that he facilitated it somehow for someone that Carl was mocking. Either way, Moriarty and Sherlock have been on opposite sides of the law since they were young. Their similarities are put into more concrete language when the men meet at the pool. Moriarty informs Sherlock that he is "a

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[37] He may be the main character and narrator but he is also an ultraviolent psychopath.

specialist, like you" and Sherlock refers to him as a "consulting criminal" ("The Great Game" 1:22:55 & 1:23:15). The consulting criminal and the consulting detective, they are unique personalities within their fields. Presumably, Moriarty is one-of-a-kind, just like Sherlock, and, with their opposing careers, they seem to complete each other. Moriarty harps on this idea when he visits Sherlock at 221B Baker Street after his acquittal in the robbery trial:

> Every fairy tale needs a good old-fashioned villain. You need me or you're nothing. Because we're just alike, you and I, except you're boring. You're on the side of the angels. ("The Reichenbach Fall" 22:39-22:54)

In Moriarty's eyes, what must make life as a hero bearable is having a good villain to work against - and, having your opponent be your equal in every way makes for a more thrilling adventure. Sherlock knows this, but he also knows that it is not simply black and white when it comes to him and Moriarty. Even yin and yang have a small circle of the opposite within them. Moriarty thinks Sherlock is boring because he fights for the law, but this Sherlock is not a purely good man, and he himself knows it.

When they end up on top of the modern-day equivalent of Reichenbach Falls – the roof of St. Bart's – Sherlock proves how similar he is to Moriarty:

> I am you, prepared to do anything. Prepared to burn. Prepared to do what ordinary people won't do. You want me to shake hands with you in hell? I shall not disappoint you…oh I may be on the side of the angels, but don't think for one sssecond that I am one of them. ("The Reichenbach Fall" 1:15:35-1:15:48 & 1:16:04-1:16:11)

Standing on that rooftop, Sherlock acknowledges what Moriarty has been trying to get out of him all along: they are the same. Sherlock may help the police and "be on the side of the angels" but there is a darkness to him. He is willing to do anything to succeed in his

endeavors; this lack of inhibition aids him as he helps New Scotland Yard, but it also makes him more like Moriarty. Even the way he hisses his "sssecond" is a connection between the two. Just as Doyle's Moriarty is described as "reptilian," the BBC's villain has a similar cold-bloodedness about him as well: when he is threatening to make shoes out of his associate, he says, "say that again and know that if you're lying to me, I will find you and I will ssskin you" ("A Scandal in Belgravia" 2:14-2:22). Sherlock and Moriarty share mannerisms, and they share an ability to do what others would never think of without repenting. Perhaps the only difference is that Sherlock has John as a moral compass. But even this relationship is something Moriarty points to as a similarity between him and Sherlock. As they sit drinking their tea in Sherlock's flat, Moriarty muses "Aren't ordinary people adorable? Well, you know. You've got John. I should get myself a live-in one" ("The Reichenbach Fall" 25:16-25:25). John is Sherlock's tie to humanity, but Moriarty sees him as pet, a plaything, and assumes that Sherlock feels the same. In this way, he tries to relate himself even more to Sherlock.

This somehow works. The final appearance Moriarty makes in the series thus far – barring his city-wide digital return – is within Sherlock's mind. When Sherlock has been shot[38] in the season three finale, the people in his life make appearances in his mind palace to help him survive the injury. Molly Hooper provides medical advice, and Mycroft tries to goad his younger brother back to life. But Moriarty is there as well; chained up and in a straitjacket, he yells in Sherlock's agonized face and taunts him.

Sherlock: Why did you never feel pain?

[38] By John's wife. This Mary Morstan is decidedly more complex than Doyle's character.

> Moriarty: You always feel it, Sherlock. but you don't have to fear it. Pain, heartbreak, loss, death, it's all good. It's all good….you're going to love being dead Sherlock. No one ever bothers you. Ah, Mrs. Hudson will cry and mummy and daddy will cry and the woman will cry. And John will cry buckets and buckets. It's him I worry about the most. That wife * pfft * You're letting him down, Sherlock. John Watson is definitely in danger. ("His Last Vow" 38:40-40:28)

In this exchange, the psychopath tries to humanize the sociopath by pointing out that these horrible things are all a part of life. And then, Moriarty begins to taunt Sherlock with the list of people he will leave heartbroken if he dies. It is goading, it is nudging – and it works. Hearing that John will be in danger without him galvanizes Sherlock and he wakes up in the hospital, despite the odds not being in his favor for survival. It is his nemesis who jolts Sherlock awake. However, something darker seems to be at play here. A tumblr post by username "theprofessorstrikesagain" compiles clips of this exchange and adds a caption:

> OKAY, CAN WE TALK ABOUT THIS FOR A SECOND?
>
> Moriarty is in Sherlock's Mind Palace. CHAINED UP, IN SHERLOCK'S BLOODY MIND PALACE.
>
> Not only did Sherlock fully accept the whole "I am you" "You're me" conversation that they had, he recognizes it IN HIMSELF that there is a part of him that truly is Moriarty.
>
> AND HE CHAINED IT UP.

This tumblr user is exploring the implications of Moriarty's location in Sherlock's mind. His padded room and straitjacket and chains at first glance look like a form of punishment. But "theprofessorstrikesagain" suggests that it is instead restraint, and it represents Sherlock

keeping the darker side of his personality in check. He recognizes how similar he is to Moriarty, and how easy it would be for him to become just as dangerous. So Sherlock locks that facet of his personality up tight and far away in the deep recesses of his mind. Doyle's Holmes and Moriarty might have represented the idea of the double, but *Sherlock*'s nemeses literally become one by this point in the series. And that emerges from the fact that this Sherlock starts out much more aware of just how similar he is to James Moriarty. And the fact that they seem to have unfinished business suggests that we might finally get that adaptation where they achieve mutually assured destruction. The timelessness of the figures means their battle can take place today and have a different outcome than Doyle's canon.

CBS's *Elementary*: "As If Men Had A Monopoly On Murder"

On *Elementary*, it is revealed towards the end of the first season that Irene Adler and Moriarty are one and the same. Sherlock spent so much time thinking the love of his life – Irene – had been killed by his nemesis – Moriarty – only to be proven very, very wrong. It may seem as though this female Moriarty would not have too much in common with Sherlock, but surprisingly enough, they still share some traits.

That being said, the most important thing to pay attention to when looking at Natalie Dormer's Jamie Moriarty *is* the fact that she is a woman. Throughout the first season, there is an unspoken assumption that the person orchestrating murders and crimes must be a man. Moriarty's henchmen are even surprised to discover the truth. When she finally reveals her identity to Sherlock, Moriarty also explains why she had a man pretend to be her on the phone earlier. It appears that some people might have a problem with their

boss or criminal mastermind being a woman. Moriarty laughs this off by saying "as if men had a monopoly on murder" ("Heroine" 43:55). We have certainly come a long way since Doyle's Watson questioned whether Irene needed protecting from accidentally committing a crime. This Irene/Moriarty knows she is every bit as good as a man in her shoes. This Moriarty is recognizable as an adaptation of Doyle's creation because of her complete disregard for the law. But in updating that character, we see *Elementary* acknowledging the fact that in this day, anything a man can do, a woman can do as well. The fact that she is a woman makes Moriarty's interactions with Watson interesting, as that character was also gender swapped in this incarnation. Always the civil criminal mastermind, Jamie Moriarty manages to get Watson away from Sherlock and takes her to a nice restaurant for lunch. While sitting in a room full of people, she tries to figure Watson out and assumes that Sherlock's companion wants to sleep with him. This dynamic takes on a potentially jealous school-girl vibe when the possibility that both women might want Sherlock arises. In fact, this idea of wanting Sherlock will come back to royally bollix Moriarty's plans.

Before Moriarty's identity is revealed, Sherlock begins to suspect Irene might be working for Moriarty. He notices a change in her birthmarks from the time when they were lovers and accuses her of removing a mark to disguise herself. As he yells at her, Irene tries to hurt him by comparing him to the very "man" he hates so much:

> You know, it's funny. I close my eyes and I try to picture him [Moriarty], and I see someone an awful lot like you. I think you do too. I think if he weren't so bent on being your enemy, he'd be your friend. ("The Woman" 40:13-40:30)

She appears to be using this to try and insult him; once we know that she *is* Moriarty, it takes on a different meaning. Even once she has revealed her true colors, she still compares

the two of them, but this time as a kind of compliment. When talking of their first meeting, she mentions that she orchestrated it because he had gotten in the way of several of her planned assassinations. Then she says:

> My first instinct was to kill you. Quietly. Discreetly. But then the more I learned about you, the more curious I became. Here at last seemed to be a mind that rivaled my own. Something too complicated and too beautiful to destroy, at least without further analysis. So I devised a way to study you in your own environment. ("Heroine" 44:33-45:05)

In the canon and on *Sherlock*, we see Holmes getting excited at the prospect of finally having someone who can equal him intellectually. This time, it is Moriarty who is expressing that delight – at least, at first. Sherlock would be a scientific investigation, a chance to explore the complexity and beauty of a mind like her own. When Sherlock denies that they have anything in common, she pityingly says, "I understand why you would think so. I know how much pride you take in your uniqueness" ("Heroine" 45:25-45:27). Sherlock is a character that is pleased by the fact that he is different and that he is superior to others. But Moriarty puts them on the same level by pointing out how very similar they are to one another. Sherlock reinforces her point later when he revels in the fact that she betrayed him. Rather than being completely devastated, like everyone expects him to be, he is invigorated by the prospect of having a worthy adversary. He tells a detective on the force "Well, I've never had a nemesis before. I mean, not a proper one. Quite looking forward to it. I imagine it to be tremendously energizing" ("Heroine" 54:35-54:40). Whether he likes it or not at the start, Sherlock certainly begins to embrace the idea that he is not the only one

like himself. Having an intellectual equal to work against intrigues him and makes him excited for the future.

Unfortunately, Moriarty and Sherlock do not get to spend that much time playing their "game." The way Moriarty is brought down at the end of the first season brings together the two most important aspects of her character: her gender and her similarity to Sherlock. Moriarty's plan for this finale is to makes sure that Macedonia does not join the European Union, and thereby render all of her Macedonian denars worthless. If she succeeded in her plan, she stood to make billions of dollars. It looked like she was going to win. She had kidnapped the daughter of a former smuggler, forcing his hand in the assassination of a diplomat's son, then had the assassin killed. Amid the uproar, she became a very rich woman – that is, until Sherlock became so distraught at having been outsmarted that he overdosed on painkillers. Moriarty visits him in the hospital and tries to get him to run away with her. She once again highlights their compatibility by saying that she never predicted Irene's "death" would send him into addiction – "Well, you surprised me. You're the only person on the planet who can" ("Heroine" 1:21:03-1:21:10). And Sherlock suddenly agrees with her belief that they are the same:

> Well, you know, we are the same, you and I. We both made the same mistake. We fell in love. It made us stupid. ("Heroine" 1:22:10-1:22:15)

Sherlock admits that he had made a mistake in falling for Irene, when she would cause him the most horrific heartache, and then turn out to be his greatest enemy. But Irene fails to see how her loving Sherlock made her in any way stupid. He explains:

> You know, she solved you. The mascot. Watson. She diagnosed your condition earlier this evening. She realized the real reason that you could never quite bring

> yourself to kill me. The reason you came back into my life. The reason you came here. ("Heroine" 1:22:36-1:22:53)

Upon first watching the show, I assumed that "condition" meant Moriarty was pregnant. Though the timeline did not lend itself to this idea, it seemed the only answer. But Sherlock is describing her love for him as a condition, an illness. His love for Irene caused his life to break apart when he lost her, but it also eventually brought him to Watson. Irene's love appears to be only a weakness, and the cause of her downfall. It turns out Sherlock had faked the overdose because Watson knew Irene would come to his side and they could catch her. This one scene manages to connect Sherlock and Moriarty perfectly, while also making them seem miles apart. They are both intelligent people who will do whatever it takes to get what they want or need. They also are both people who are not above feelings or falling in love. But, at the end of the day, her love proves her complete undoing, while his ultimately made him stronger than ever with a companion by his side. The viewer is left wondering: is her weakness brought on by the fact that she is a *woman* in love, or is it that she is not really his complete equal despite what she may think? Either way, this incarnation manages to present a Sherlock and Moriarty that are similar to each other, like their predecessors, but also vastly different in a way that seems to be linked to the decision to gender swap.

Conclusion

The Final Problem

"It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these last words…"
(Doyle "The Final Problem")

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created a bit of an immortal being when he first wrote about Sherlock Holmes. Not just in the sense that Holmes would prove to be very difficult to kill off, but also because he and certain characters from his world would become incredibly important cultural figures. In terms of numbers of adaptations, Doyle's canon is up there with the likes of William Shakespeare's plays and Jane Austen's novels. But there is one crucial difference. When Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is adapted into a film it is either set in the time it was written or adapted so thoroughly that it only bears a passing resemblance to the original. For example, the film *Bridget Jones' Diary* has an outspoken single woman choosing between the rich handsome man – who is also quite the cad – and the seemingly standoffish and snobbish man – who turns out to the one. But the characters are not dancing country dances, instead they are getting drunk and smoking cigarettes at Tarts and Vicars parties. This intense adaptation is because Austen's novels are so defined by their setting, with the very strict social customs. The same is seen with adaptations of Shakespeare[39]. A play like *Hamlet* really has to be set in the time it was meant. When it was adapted into a film with Ethan Hawke, *Hamlet 2000*, viewers saw Claudius murdering his brother for control of the Elsinore Company. The stakes for revenge are just not as high when a kingdom is not on the line. But Sherlock Holmes is able to fit effortlessly into any

[39] Well, usually not the Tarts and Vicars, but sometimes.

time or place. It does not give viewers or readers a moment's pause when the detective is sleuthing around modern London or fighting robots in the twenty-second century. This is because Holmes is not a direct reflection of the time in which he was created. The qualities that define him are internal and clear. Also, he is a kind of heroic figure unlike any that came before him. He contains aspects of Thomas Carlyle's "Great Man", but he is not restricted to that one heroic type. We see this *Sherlock* and *Elementary* and any other adaptation.

The endurance also applies to John Watson, Irene Adler, and James Moriarty. These three characters have no concrete ties to their original Victorian England setting, but they all have strong ties to Holmes. Watson is definable by his internal qualities of morality and bravery as well as his medical profession. A man who has recently returned from war and life out in the world, Watson can easily be uprooted. He may get married in the canon, but his strongest tie is with the man who seems to complete him – Holmes. Like Holmes, he is a new way of looking at a heroic trope – though at first glace he appears to be a sidekick, their partnership is more complicated than that. The same is true for Irene Adler who is no more the typical version of a hero's woman than Watson is a sidekick. Even in the Victorian era, she was a modern woman. Adaptations today still see her pushing the envelope of what is expected of women in the modern age. These expectations may change, but the fact that she always finds a way of besting Holmes does not. And finally, Moriarty is so much more than a cut and dry villain. He is a figure who causes discomfort because of how closely he resembles Holmes' hero. And since crime will always pay, Moriarty - with no family and no regard for any restrictions – will always be there to organize his criminal web. Which

means that Holmes will always be there to fight him until the bitter end, however that may play out.

The fact that we will continue to see Holmes and these specific characters adapted and re-imagined is something we can count on. There will never be a time when such timeless figures are no longer applicable. Viewers and readers always have a soft spot for characters that behave in unexpected ways and defy stereotypes. So, as long as films and television shows and collections of new stories are being made, these characters will fit in and generation after generation will realize that this is because Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created truly timeless heroic characters.

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