

“NOW WATSON, THE FAIR SEX IS YOUR DEPARTMENT”:
GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN POST-2010 SHERLOCK HOLMES ADAPTATIONS

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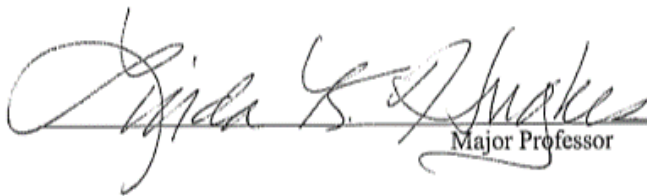
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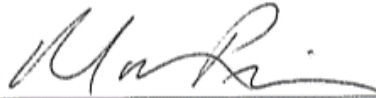
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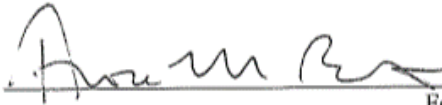
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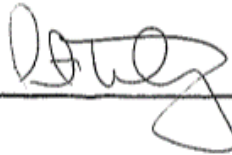
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I dedicate this dissertation to the women who inspired, encouraged, and taught me to persevere in pursuing my dreams. I would not be here, writing this massive piece of text, without their love and support.

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Introduction

“So, with Sherlock Holmes, the ball – the original nucleus deposited by Edgar Allan Poe nearly forty years earlier – was at last set rolling. As it went, it swelled into a vast mass – it set off others – it became a spate – a torrent – an avalanche of mystery fiction.”

-Dorothy L. Sayers, “The Omnibus of Crime”

Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Murder in the Rue Morgue” (1841) with protagonist C. Auguste Dupin is often cited as the first piece of detective fiction. While recent studies and investigations into detective fiction’s roots have put forth other contenders for the “first” detective story (such as Catherine Crowe’s *The Adventures of Susan Hopley, or, Circumstantial Evidence* [1841]),¹ the larger point is not the first detective story or detective figure but rather the genre’s enduring and pervasive popularity. This popularity comes, in part, from the genre’s cultural and social significance. The detective genre has “long-been heralded as an especially useful vehicle for social commentary and critique – indeed, since the detective novels (and detective films) are products of mass consumption they have the ability to make this commentary to quite a large and diverse audience” (Humann 16). Thus, I highlight the detective genre’s increasing attention to its elasticity, which is embodied in its ability to operate “as different things to readers at different times”; most recently, trends in detective fiction have focused on re-casting, re-imagining, and generally deconstructing the genre itself (Humann 16). This ability is a worthwhile point of study because it emphasizes wider social and cultural movements that challenge societal norms. This dissertation specifically examines how the detective genre reflects social and cultural conversations regarding gender and sexuality.

Sherlock Holmes of 221B Baker Street is the quintessential detective in Anglo-American culture. The product of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s imagination and inspired by his mentor Dr.

¹ Catherine Crowe (1790-1872) rose to popularity as a novelist primarily for her works regarding spiritualism and middle- and lower-class domestic life (Wilkes). *Susan Hopley* is considered a contender to the title of the first crime novel and Susan herself the first detective.

Joseph Bell, Sherlock Holmes made his entrance in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1887 with “A Study in Scarlet.” Holmes is the “Great Detective” whose identity, according to Lynnette Porter, “is determined by the way he processes information” (“Introduction” 1-2). Conan Doyle’s consulting detective was an instant success; while there are certainly precursors to Holmes, “no one brought it all together like [Conan] Doyle. Sherlock Holmes comes alive in his stories. [Holmes] stands out from the pages because he not only seems real...but he also feels wholly original” (Ashley 49-50). As a result, Sherlock Holmes is of paramount importance to the development of the detective genre. His narratives, hugely popular and running from 1887-1927, created a formula for future detectives to follow (or, alternatively, challenge) and his almost immediate adaptation to other media like the theater and radio gave Holmes a versatility that means he is never far from popular culture’s imagination. Moreover, as a product of mass consumption and best-recognized figure in detective fiction, Sherlock Holmes “allows the audience to relate or be attracted to him” (“Introduction” 3). This reciprocal relationship emphasizes not only Holmes’s popularity, but his elasticity. He can signify different social, cultural, and even political values to his audiences across time and place.

In this dissertation, I examine the Sherlock Holmes canon’s² post-2010 adaptations and appropriations from the perspective of gender and sexuality. I will argue that the adaptations and appropriations under discussion in the next four chapters are outlets for experimenting with the reevaluation of gender norms and sexuality in contemporary Anglo-American society and culture. This experimentation aims to combat and challenge those norms, with varying degrees of success. I also make additional connections to how this contribution both contradicts and continues themes present in the Sherlock Holmes canon. The radical shift between canon and

² I use the term “canon” to refer to the original Sherlock Holmes stories written by Conan Doyle.

post-2010 adaptation emphasizes Heather Duerre Humann's argument that the detective genre participates in and reflects "widely held (and still-shifting) societal attitudes about gender norms" (27). This participation reflects the genre's inherent elasticity and these Sherlock Holmes adaptations and appropriations explore more nuanced views of gender and sexuality, a development at odds with the Sherlock Holmes canon. As a whole, the new developments in adaptation and appropriation contribute to a wider trend in the detective genre away from conservative, heteronormative values and towards embracing the genre's elasticity and providing a more nuanced and radical understanding of gender and sexuality.

Detective Fiction and its History

Detective fiction originates from the more general genre of "crime fiction," a genre which grew first and foremost from worsening conditions in crowded, industrial cities where "the newspaper coverage kept the focus on the issue of crime and increased the public's appetite" for sensationalized stories (Thompson and Fitzgerald 6). This volume of crime writing greatly influenced subsequent representations of criminality, but "allowed no 'textual space' for the figure of the detective" (Priestman 3). Instead, the fictional detective and the detective genre had to wait for the first real-life detectives to emerge. The word "detective" originated in an article for *Chambers's Journal* from 1843, which referred to plain clothes "detective police" (Ashley 41). This article, "The London Police," outlines the history of law enforcement in London and introduces this new type of policeman. The author gives this agent of law and order a mixed review: "The functions of the new police are multifarious, and, considering the temper, steadiness, and intelligence they demand, have been hitherto surprisingly well performed" (54). The middle class distrusted the new detective force and its surveillance of the domestic sphere

(Trodd 18). This mistrust meant the detective force did not grow to keep up with London's increasing population and would not inspire the first fictional detectives. Instead, that honor goes to the Frenchman Eugène François Vidocq (1775-1857).

While Vidocq would not name himself a "detective," he nevertheless inspired literature's first private detectives. Vidocq spent a decade of his life as a criminal and forger but turned his life in a new direction after volunteering his services as an informer to the French police. In 1812, Vidocq established the first detective bureau, the Brigade de la Sûreté, and in 1834 the first private detective agency, Le Bureau des Renseignements (Ashley 41). Literature did not wait long to take up the new crime-solving detective and specifically the detective as an independent agent from government departments. *Richmond; or, Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Officer* (1827) is the first English novel to feature a professional detective as the protagonist and takes up the real-life Bow Street Runners, one of London's first detective forces and founded in 1749 (Rzepka 67). (These professional detectives are an entirely different entity from those first identified in 1843.) More popular and widely-known are the Dupin short stories.³ These stories

can be said to comprise the twin fountainheads of modern crime fiction: the tale of detection that offers the puzzle of an unsolved crime (in a 'locked room',⁴ no less), and asks the reader, in effect, 'Whodunit?', and the caper or crime adventure tale that offers the problem of capturing or outwitting the person known to have committed the crime, and asks the reader, 'How is it to be done?' (Rzepka 74-75)

Dupin's work follows just such a pattern; for example, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), Madame L'Esplanade and her daughter are found dead in their Parisian home. The murders occurred in a locked room and the police are baffled. Dupin and his companion lay a trap and outwit the criminal, thus solving the case. Poe's preliminary work in detective

³ "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841); "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" (1842); and "The Purloined Letter" (1844)

⁴ The "locked room" puzzle centers on a crime committed in circumstances where it is seemingly impossible for the perpetrator to commit the crime or evade detection while escaping from the crime scene.

characteristics and methodology laid a foundation upon which Conan Doyle drew and expanded with his Sherlock Holmes canon. In other words, what Poe started, Conan Doyle fully developed. Conan Doyle acknowledges this connection in “A Study in Scarlet” when Watson comments to Holmes, “You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories” (Conan Doyle 12). While Holmes dismisses this comment, Watson’s words nevertheless acknowledge the link between Conan Doyle and Poe. Specific to this dissertation, while Holmes puts no stock in Watson’s commentary, this quote does emphasize that Holmes himself is an adaptation of Dupin. Thus, the layers of adaptation and appropriation are built into Sherlock Holmes himself.

Early detectives like C. Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes were not part of a professional police force and utilized ratiocination – the process of exact reasoning. The detective’s universe is “perfectly controlled, ordered, and above all, rational” based on “unemotional logic” (Katzir 100). Thus, “the essence of Holmes’s detective ability [lies] in the data he was able to collect and the reasoning in which he engaged” (D. Redmond 59). Victorian society gendered this logic and ordered universe as “masculine intellect” (Katzir 100) and Holmes’s premiere in “A Study in Scarlet” reflected and tapped into an idea of masculinity in late Victorian society based on reason, logic, and a commitment to Queen and country. This emphasis on data collection identifies Holmes as a fictional scientist; that he utilizes these facts to bring about justice makes him a consulting detective. Specific to my dissertation, in his quest to achieve justice Holmes quite often perpetuates gender roles *or* challenges Victorian ideas of gender and sexuality. For example, the detective most often perpetuates women’s gendered roles as “domestic angels” but, at the same time, supports the Victorian “New Woman” and her quest for independence. Holmes’s ratiocination further identifies him as a figure of the Enlightenment

and its emphasis on empirical reasoning and factual evidence. Conan Doyle, as well as Poe and even Charles Dickens,⁵ present their readers with detectives whose “terms, figures of speech, and methodological practices” promote “a *new*, emerging worldview that was secular and naturalistic in opposition to nineteenth-century scriptural literalism, Natural Theology, and the vestiges [of] Enlightenment deism” (Frank 3-4).⁶ In other words, these detectives represent an attention to emerging sciences and specifically to Charles Darwin’s publications concerning evolution and the challenge to the biblical narrative. In particular, Darwin’s *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), his third major work on evolutionary theory, gave detective authors like Conan Doyle “a natural history of human emotions setting forth a psychology and a semiotics that could become the model for the acts of detection” (Frank 145). Accordingly, these first fictional detectives engage in the “ongoing turbulence” between science and biblical narratives and as a consequence “offe[r] the reading public...an important lesson in the power of material evidence” (Rzepka 70). This material evidence takes the form of clues in detective fiction.

Sherlock Holmes and his adventures represent “a need for the rendering in detective fiction of a coherent vision of the universe” (Frank 155). To create this coherent vision, Holmes relies on clues. Clues are material evidence of something that happened at some point in history (Rzepka 70, 115). While scientists such as Charles Darwin and Charles Lyell utilized clues to promote evolution and biological theory, detectives like Sherlock Holmes examined clues to uncover the two narrative threads of the detective story: “the story of the crime and the story of the investigation” (Rzepka 18). The story of the investigation takes place in the present and its purpose is to uncover the story of the crime.

⁵ Dickens’s Inspector Bucket from *Bleak House* is a positive portrayal of a rational, intelligent detective.

⁶ These traits differ from those of Vidocq, as Charles Rzepka points out: “[S]trength, agility, audacity, stubbornness, quick thinking, witty repartee, and unflinching courage take precedence in Vidocq’s self-portrait over rational interference” (60).

While gathering clues and reaching conclusions to solve mysteries is most often referred to as deduction, this method is actually *abduction*, “the probabilistic method to be used when the facts to be reasoned with are uncertain” (Brownson 37):

Broadly speaking, abduction is a method of reasoning under conditions of uncertainty...In the case of both deduction and induction both the major and minor terms are known absolutely. In the case of abduction one or both of these terms is only probably true (Brownson 37).

For instance, abduction says “*Some* men are bald, you are bald, therefore you *may* be a man”; the statement itself is true but requires extra evidence (Brownson 37) and therefore a certain amount of logic and imagination to validate the abductive statement. This caveat in abduction implies that Holmes possesses a certain amount of imagination. Holmes’s advantage over both his partner Dr. John Watson and the official police force is “that he can see so many more options and combinations to pick from”; such imagination is contrasted most often with police agents who “often fail not only because they are unimaginative...but because their priors do not account for all the facts, or because they begin with a prior and then look for the facts that would validate it” (Brownson 40). This melding of science, abduction, and imagination creates a consulting detective who rarely leaves a case unsolved or an investigation unfinished.

However, this attention to scientific reasoning and empirical thinking is not without its drawbacks. Much of the detective genre’s conservatism comes from its roots in Western imperialism and gendered binaries and as such detective fiction is saturated with xenophobic and homophobic fears. As Michael Cohen reflects in his essay for *Diversity in Detective Fiction*,

I have recently been wondering whether racism is a necessary element in mystery and detective stories. I do not mean racism in the narrowest sense, but fear and hatred of the other, whether it expresses itself in racist and national stereotypes, in misogyny, in the queer-baiting that the hard-boiled detectives cannot seem to avoid, in a specific conviction that Jews, blacks, Chinese, or communists are out to destroy us, or in some more subtle form of exophobia (144).

This “exophobia” – ethnic bias, racial prejudice, and other forms of stereotyping – has played a significant role in detective fiction from its inception, and twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors are challenging that root narrative structure. Detective novels like Ear Derr Biggers’ Charlie Chan series, published from the 1930s-1950s, for example, play into stereotypes of Chinese people – Charlie Chan is depicted as an effeminate man who espouses faux Confucian quotes. This encoded racism is also present in the Nancy Drew series. In the original 1930 publication of *The Secret of the Old Clock*, Nancy comes across an African-American caretaker named Jeff Tucker. Tucker speaks in a stereotyped dialect and is easily fooled into intoxication by robbers; this dialect and drunkenness infantilize him to the reader and are clearly situated inside racial prejudices. These instances of racism arise specifically in the detective genre because the detective historically opposes difference, or evil: “To put it simply, the detective opposes evil. Evil is either us or not-us. The villain must be unlike us in order to serve the function of scapegoat” (Cohen 154). Authors like Louis Owens and Walter Mosley push back against such stereotypes and prejudices. Louis Owens, a novelist of Choctaw, Cherokee, and Irish-American descent, wrote novels such as *Nightland* (1996), which appropriate the Anglo detective figure to explore issues facing Native Americans and to elevate Native American culture. Walter Mosley’s detective Easy Rawlins is a black war veteran in 1940s Los Angeles. The first Easy Rawlins novel, *The Devil in the Blue Dress* (1990), confronts racial prejudices in the Los Angeles Police Department, poverty, and the idea of “passing” as a different race or ethnicity. Mosley’s novels “are rich in black language...and they also claim symbolic power, not only in their historical sense and their frequent awareness of the oppression of other races...but also in their presentation of a master narrative, a black aspirational story in which Easy symbolises an upwardly mobile African-American” (Knight 188-89). Such characters shift the

detective genre away from the “us or not-us” and towards a more nuanced understanding of society. As I will explore in my first chapter, Sherlock Holmes embodies this “us or not-us” attitude in the canon but his adaptations, such as Kareem Abdul-Jabbar’s *Mycroft Holmes*, do much to combat that racial binary.

Race and racism are particularly well-suited to the detective genre because this genre traditionally relies on identifying difference through observation. As Elizabeth Carolyn Miller notes, the Sherlock Holmes canon’s “treatment of race and criminality usefully reveals how Holmes prioritizes visually mediated knowledge” (27). While I will explore this facet of the genre in more detail in my first chapter, suffice to say here that a detective’s reliance on an “us versus other” system emphasizes identity as a tangible, visible trait on which a character is judged. However, contemporary detective authors are incorporating positive portrayals of the transgender community. Renee James, a transgender author, created the transgender detective Bobbi Logan in *Transition to Murder* (2014). After the murder of a young transgender woman, Logan becomes so incensed with the lack of police response that she herself comes out as transgender and sends her career as a hairstylist into descent; as a response to the collapse of her career and personal life, Logan sets out to uncover the murderer. Additionally, Robert Galbraith (J.K. Rowling’s detective fiction pseudonym) promotes an empathetic, positive image of transgender individuals in the second Cormoran Strike novel, *The Silkworm* (2014). These examples of transgender characters, paralleling the shifts in race I previously mentioned, stand in stark contrast to more negative portrayals of the transgender community in previous detective novels, like Mickey Spillane’s *Vengeance is Mine* (1950). In Spillane’s novel, the hardboiled detective Mike Hammer vilifies a transgender woman who is both the murderer and his love interest. Spillane’s novel condemns the transgender community because “the crime of ‘passing’

as a woman is ultimately what Hammer finds more disturbing than the murders” (Humann 3-4). Thus, while ratiocination and divining solutions to mysteries from clues remain at the heart of the detective novel across time, these novels’ engagement with certain social issues shifts to reflect changing cultural values.

The genre’s ability to shift from exophobia to acceptance reflects the detective figure’s elasticity, a trait I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction. S/he is “a person who has acquired a valuable but dangerous” knowledge and is therefore an “ambiguous” figure who is “necessary to society but potentially destructive of it” (Brownson 6). As these more recent twentieth- and twenty-first-century examples have indicated, the detective utilizes his/her valuable knowledge not simply to reflect social and cultural standards, but to challenge them as well. My analyses over the four chapters of this dissertation argue that numerous adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes canon reflect changes in Anglo-American culture regarding the concepts of gender and sexuality. Charles Brownson, in his *The Figure of the Detective* (2014), argues that “changes in the [detective] formula can be explained by changes in the culture in which the genre is embedded” (54). This assertion operates as a controlling idea in each of my chapters and further supports my argument that the detective genre actively engages with social and cultural debates.

Sherlock Holmes’s Literary Birth: Conan Doyle and *The Strand Magazine*

Sherlock Holmes reached British readers in the era of mass printing. By 1832, “the duties on paper and the tax on newspapers began to fall, while printing technologies...made it increasingly possible to print long runs of daily journals” (Schwarzbach 234). This development in the financial viability of publishing coincided with the advent of a mass British reading public,

which Wilkie Collins identified as “The Unknown Public” in a 21 August 1858 article in Charles Dickens’s *Household Words*. Collins explains that he discovered this public not through literary



Figure I.1. A cover of *The Strand Magazine*; http://bakerstreet.wikia.com/wiki/The_Strand_Magazine

masterpieces and prestigious journals, but the penny quartos; he describes this public as one “to be counted by millions; the mysterious, the unfathomable, the universal public of the penny-novel Journals.” And, while Collins states that this public is in its early stages of reading, he predicts that “the future of English fiction may rest with this Unknown Public, which is now waiting to be taught the difference between a good book and a bad” (217, 222). This system of mass

publication brought “individuals together through concurrent acts of reading that enabled them to conceive of themselves as a

national body.” Victorians, in other words, “watched the change in the nation’s reading habits with remarkable self-awareness as the newspaper evolved from a luxury item read by one-eighteenth of the population to required reading for nearly all of Britain” (Rubery 9, 160). The result was a journal, magazine, or periodical for men, women, and even children of every class. From *The Girl’s Own Paper* addressing contemporary concerns for middle- and lower-class girls to *The Athenaeum* discussing literary developments, a plethora of reading material existed for every literate British citizen. It was into this foray that George Newnes arrived, the first of several key figures in the Sherlock Holmes publication saga.

George Newnes understood that the publishing industry was at a crucial turning point, and he forsook a life in the church to start his first magazine, *Tit-Bits*, which published its first issue on 22 October 1881. This venture was a success and *Tit-Bit* sales surpassed 500,000 by

1890 (Ashley 24, 26). Newnes became a wealthy man, and in 1890 he joined forces with Herbert Greenhough Smith to start a new publication: *The Strand Magazine*. *Strand* ran its first issue in January 1891 with the stated “promis[e] to publish richly illustrated works of both the ‘best British writers’ and ‘special translations from the first foreign authors.’”⁷ Newnes structured the magazine to “evok[e] the notion of reader engagement with, and editorial control of, the periodical press” (Hale and Smith 666, 672). As a result, Newnes created a participatory reader. *Tit-Bit* “used contests, reader-generated content, correspondence columns, and an innovative rail-commuter insurance scheme to forge customer loyalty and build an imagined community.” The publication even offered a “Vigilance Prize” to the reader who caught a spelling error or any other mistake in an issue (Hale and Smith 672). (A contest worthy of Sherlock Holmes himself.) While *Strand* did not directly deploy such tactics, Newnes nevertheless stressed the connection between *Tit-Bits* and *Strand*. For example, the first issue of *Strand* included an image of a newsboy reading *Tit-Bits*, thus “the link between the two publications was highlighted from the outset” (Hale and Smith 672). Former *Tit-Bits* readers would associate Newnes’s new publication with that same level of participation. And, indeed, readers soon came to believe in Sherlock Holmes as a living, breathing human. Holmes is the first modern fictional character to be treated as real; canonic Holmes readers “believed Holmes existed...and the interwar period witnessed an outpouring of articles in prominent magazines, and books from respectable publishers, which treated Holmes and Watson as real individuals [and] never mentioned Doyle” (Saler 600). This fetishization created a cult around the detective and his world:

The cult of Holmes focuses not just on a singular character, but on his entire world: fans of the ‘canon’ obsess about every detail of the fictional universe Doyle created, mentally inhabiting this ‘geography of the imagination’ in a way that was never true for the

⁷ Conan Doyle was one of these “best British writers” and his first story for *Strand* was “The Voice of Science” in March 1891 (Ashley 37).

partisans of earlier characters. (Saler 601)

Audiences were not just reading about Holmes and Watson's adventures; they were also participants in those adventures, a phenomenon still evident among followers of twenty-first-century adaptations.

This idea of a participatory reader also has its roots in the *Strand* illustrations. Newnes insisted that every page of *Strand* contain illustrations (Ashley 36) and Sidney Paget's illustrations of Sherlock Holmes deserve attention here. Paget, originally hired by mistake (Greenhough Smith had meant to hire the younger brother, Walter), created a Sherlock Holmes that came to life for readers:

Hitherto few magazines were illustrated in such profusion or with pictures that helped the reader identify with the characters. But 'A Scandal in Bohemia' has ten drawings, starting with an iconic one of Holmes in his study, standing by the fire and talking to a seated Watson. In an instant the reader is there, with them, in the room. The illustrations bring the written word – already conjuring up mystery and suspense – to life. (Ashley 51)

In fact, Paget used his brother as his model for Sherlock Holmes and the resemblance was so uncanny that people would stop Walter in the street (Ashley 51). *The Strand Magazine* was constructing the idea of the participatory reader – a reader who did not merely read a text but shared and engaged with a particular text. This participatory reader helped instigate both Sherlock Holmes's enduring popularity and Conan Doyle's inability to ever truly kill off his consulting detective.

Conan Doyle's relationship with Newnes is well-documented and well-known.⁸ Conan Doyle owned 250 shares of *Strand*'s limited liability corporation, which speaks of the author's investment in the magazine's success and his commitment to advancing his literary triumphs (Hale and Smith 678). This relationship was mutually beneficial to the point of financial

⁸ Conan Doyle's friendship and influence even helped Newnes secure a baronetcy (Ashley 111).

obscurity; Conan Doyle's name on a *Strand* cover "meant sales would increase by a hundred thousand" (Ashley 55) and accounts for one rationale for continuing to produce the Sherlock Holmes stories. Conan Doyle catapulted the *Strand* to success, and the magazine gave Conan Doyle the means to write full-time (and give up his medical practice) (Ashley 56). So, despite Conan Doyle's not-so-subtle love/hate relationship with his consulting detective, the Sherlock Holmes canon nevertheless contributed to the financial stability Conan Doyle required to pursue his literary career. Indeed, the Sherlock Holmes canon lasted for decades: beginning with "A Study in Scarlet"⁹ in 1887 and ending with "The Adventure of Shoscombe Place" in March 1927, this extended time frame underscores the consulting detective's popularity, something Sherlock Holmes experiences to this day in the character's many afterlives.

Sherlock Holmes in Adaptation

The number of authorized adaptations, unauthorized adaptations, fan fiction, and even slash fiction for the Sherlock Holmes canon is too lengthy to detail here. Neil McCaw asserts that the "history of adaptation of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories is unrivalled in terms of sheer number and diversity of adapted works" (36). Moreover, adaptation of the Sherlock Holmes canon began almost immediately when William Gillette adapted Sherlock Holmes to the theater in 1899 (Ashley 126, 128). The Sherlock Holmes canon has been adapted to theater, film, television, and other media and these adaptations, moreover, represent and embody different ideologies according to place of production and decade. In the 1980s and 1990s, for example, adaptors of Sherlock Holmes in the UK drew heavily on the canon to produce faithful Victorian adaptations. These works, like ITV Granada's *Sherlock Holmes*

⁹ A reminder here that "A Study in Scarlet" was first published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891) was the first Sherlock Holmes story published in *The Strand Magazine*.

television series starring Michael Cox as Sherlock Holmes, rejected the idea of pastiche in favor of “textual fidelity” (McCaw 38). According to Linda Hutcheon in her formative and highly influential work *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006), adaptation fidelity is a “morally loaded discourse” that “is based on the implied assumption that adapters aim simply to reproduce the adapted text.” Hutcheon emphasizes that adaptation is repetition “but repetition without replication” (7), thereby implying that the goal of textual fidelity and the re-working of an original text must find some common ground. In other words, fidelity and “replication” are highly subjective terms based on the adaptor’s understanding of the source text and his/her idea of a “true” adaptation, as well as various cultural, social, and political factors. For example, ITV Granada’s producers created an authentic Sherlock Holmes television series based on what *they* believed to be the “original style” of Conan Doyle’s canon (McCaw 39). This attention to textual fidelity is also grounded in the ideology of the 1980s and 1990s. Margaret Thatcher’s term as UK’s Prime Minister from 1979-1990 is characterized by the political rhetoric of “Thatcherism,” which emphasized “authority, law and order, patriotism, national unity, [and] the family” (qt. in McCaw 36). ITV Granada’s Sherlock Holmes series reflected this rhetoric with a “selective national-historical discourse”; the stories themselves “work to soothe the anxieties of the national present with narratives in which England is ultimately manageable and comprehensible” (McCaw 36). As a further complication, the Conan Doyle Estate still held the copyright for Sherlock Holmes; for example, the Estate’s promotion of textual fidelity also plays a role in adaptations before Sherlock Holmes’s release from copyright, an event that took place in 2014 with a legal battle in the U.S. In sum, this example underscores that adaptation, no matter the overall goal, is always a reflection of underlying ideologies and social, cultural, and even political concerns.

The adaptations under discussion in this dissertation do not offer this textual fidelity. Instead, these works embody Michael Alexander's argument regarding the act of adaptation: that adaptations are palimpsestuous works (qtd. in Hutcheon 6). A palimpsest is a text on which the original writing has been erased to allow for new writing but in which traces of the earlier version still remain. Such a description applies to my dissertation: the adaptors rely on Sherlock Holmes's name and canon as well as his significance to Anglo-American culture to re-write the characters, character dynamics, and overall cultural and social messages to challenge cultural and social norms. As Conan Doyle famously told Gillette when the actor wished to write a marriage scene for Sherlock Holmes in the stage production, "Marry him, murder him, do what you will to him" (qtd. in Baker 146). While neither marrying nor murdering Sherlock Holmes occurs in my chosen adaptations, the spirit of Conan Doyle's words is alive and well. With little to no regard to textual fidelity, the wishes of Conan Doyle's Estate, or past adaptations, the post-2010 works take Conan Doyle's "do what you will to him" wish to heart.

The immense popularity of the post-2010 adaptations underscores how well audiences and readers have responded to this shift from textual fidelity to transgressive re-imagining of the Sherlock Holmes canon. For example, Guy Ritchie's 2009 and 2011 *Sherlock Holmes* films were well-received in both Britain and the United States. *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) had a budget of an estimated \$90 million and grossed \$209,019,489 in the U.S. and £3,081,072 on its opening weekend in the U.K., according to the International Movie Database (IMDb). *Game of Shadows* (2011) experienced similar success, grossing \$186,830,669 in the U.S. Another film featured in this dissertation, *Mr. Holmes* (2015), claims a cast of heavy-hitting British actors such as Sir Ian McKellen as an aged Sherlock Holmes and esteemed American actors like Laura Linney. BBC's *Sherlock* has earned numerous awards, again emphasizing Sherlock Holmes's

enduring popularity: Amanda Abbington (who plays Mary Watson) won the Dagger Award for Best Supporting Actress at the 2014 UK Crime Thriller Awards; BBC *Sherlock*'s premier episode, "A Study in Pink," won an award for Best Television Drama in 2011; and *Sherlock*'s 2016 Christmas Special, "The Abominable Bride," won the Outstanding Special Visual Effects in a Supporting Role Award at the 2016 Primetime Emmy Awards. In a similar vein, CBS's *Elementary* has won several awards as well: two Prism Awards (2014 and 2015) for Drama Series Multi-Episode Storyline, and a GLADD Media Award (2014) for Outstanding Individual Episode, and Best Actress for Lucy Liu (who plays Joan Watson) at the Seoul International Drama Awards in 2013.

This popularity in adaptation also extends to the book format as well. While not as widely recognized by mass audiences, the novels and novel series included in my dissertation emphasize Sherlock Holmes's enduring mass appeal. For example, Sherry Thomas's *Lady Sherlock Holmes* series is produced by Berkley, a subgroup of Penguin Random House that specializes in women's fiction with an emphasis on discovering new talent. Together with its subsidiary publishing houses, Penguin Random House puts out almost 15,000 new titles annually, titles which cover a vast range of genres and target audiences. Brittany Cavallaro's *Charlotte Holmes* series is published by Katherine Tegen Books, a subgroup of HarperCollins that specializes in young adult and children's novels. HarperCollins is the second-largest book publisher in the world. Its company profile boasts publishing operations in 17 countries and a print and digital catalogue of more than 200,000 titles.¹⁰ Titan publishes Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouses's *Mycroft Holmes* and this publishing house possesses a long-standing reputation as a graphic novel company that has utilized its success to expand its brand to other genres such as

¹⁰ www.harpercollins.com/worldwide/about-us/company-profile/

crime and the supernatural. Specifically, Titan also publishes reprints of the Sherlock Holmes canon. Lastly, Anthony Horowitz's *The House of Silk* is produced by Mulholland Books, a subgroup of Little, Brown and Company. Mulholland Books focuses on genres such as the thriller, crime novel, and supernatural. Perhaps most significantly, Horowitz's novel has the official endorsement of the Conan Doyle Estate. These accolades and prestigious publishing histories emphasize the Sherlock Holmes canon's enduring popularity and its continuing presence in Anglo-American culture. Specific to this dissertation, these new adaptations, whether consciously or not, challenge core tenets and beliefs that pervade the canon and reflect Victorian and Edwardian social and cultural mores.

Rationale for Time Frame

I limit my timeframe to Sherlock Holmes adaptations created from 2010-2018 for two specific reasons. First, as I previously mentioned when discussing Sherlock Holmes adaptations in the 1980s and 1990s, the character of Sherlock Holmes entered the public domain after a heated copyright debate in 2014. I will explore this debate in greater detail in my third chapter, as it pertains to my analysis of Horowitz's *The House of Silk*. Here, it suffices to say that the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in *Leslie S. Klinger v. Conan Doyle Estate, Ltd.* that the character of Sherlock Holmes belongs in the public domain. This freedom means that adaptors require neither permission nor license from the Conan Doyle Estate to take Sherlock Holmes (and by extension Dr. John Watson) and change him, his adventures, and his setting at will. While a number of the adaptations under discussion here do work with the Conan Doyle Estate, like BBC's *Sherlock* and Horowitz's *Silk*, others do not, like Thomas's *Lady Sherlock Holmes* series. Thus, this freedom from copyright ensures that Sherlock Holmes is accessible cultural

property.

Furthermore, I identify 2010 as a key turning point in Anglo-American social conversations regarding gender and sexuality. According to Linda J. Jencson in her analysis of the queered family dynamics in BBC's *Sherlock*, the year 2010 marks a shift in "contemporary societal questioning [and] the renegotiation of the social norms of [the] era" (152) both in the U.S. and the UK. Jencson's comment marks a shift in the twenty-first century that has its roots in a movement from the 1980s and 1990s to destigmatize homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, and break down gender barriers. People whose identities were shaped around their sexuality or diagnosis went from an "unmentionable" category of individuals to a group "who deserved human rights, and if you looked close enough, were 'normal,' just like everybody else" (Kaufman and Powell 1). Plays such as Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1991) and Jonathan Larson's *Rent* (1996), for example, openly engaged with homosexuality and HIV/AIDS in a sympathetic light; on the other hand, productions such as Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* (1979) stirred controversy over gender roles and created parallels between colonial and sexual oppression. Within this historical context, Jencson's comment signals a move from an emphasis on the HIV/AIDS crisis towards a wider view of gender and sexual identity in popular culture. Sociologists such as Amin Ghaziani are hypothesizing that society is currently in the midst of a historical transition in terms of identity politics; queer culture is "sexually fluid, expanding and multiplying static identities to include labels such as trans, queer, genderqueer, polyamorous, and flexible" (Kaufman and Powell 2). Jencson's comment, then, answers to this dynamism in identity labels. In other words, the shift in identity politics in the 1980s and 1990s has expanded further in the twenty-first-century, and specifically since 2010, to break down binaries and embrace sexual identity and gender as liminal spaces.

Given detective fiction's elasticity and its relationship to society, popular and legal debates concerning gender and sexuality are relevant to my arguments. For example, one significant example is the Paycheck Fairness Act, a bill intended to fight gender discrimination. The U.S. House of Representatives approved the bill in 2009, but it failed in the U.S. Senate in 2010; nevertheless, it ignited a debate in popular culture regarding women's pay as opposed to men's pay. A piece of legislation that did successfully pass through the House and Senate was the 2013 law negating the ban against women serving in combat roles for the military; this ruling signifies an acknowledgement of equality between men and women concerning their ability to engage in armed conflict. Across the Atlantic, the UK has experienced more success concerning equality in pay and employment between men and women. As of 2018, employers with more than 250 employees must report all salaries for men and women on their payroll, implying that such transparency will combat wage disparities based on gender.

The various feminist arguments I make in this dissertation also touch on or connect to the #MeToo Movement. This movement's agenda is to help survivors of sexual violence with an overall goal to "reframe and expand the global conversation around sexual violence to speak to the needs of a broader spectrum of survivors."¹¹ Such a goal statement emphasizes a shift in global understandings of feminism and its political importance, as well as the increased attention to women's rights. The movement drew international attention in 2017 with the accusations and subsequent trial against Hollywood produced Harvey Weinstein. The mass public took to Twitter, Facebook, and other social media accounts to share their own stories regarding sexual harassment and assault. This conversation makes its way into my fourth chapter; Brittany Cavallaro's *Charlotte Holmes* series deals with rape and post-traumatic stress and social

¹¹ www.metoomvmt.org/about#history.

prejudices rape victims face. Much like the #MeToo movement, Cavallaro's novels foreground sexual harassment and assault to bring greater awareness and attention to this social issue.

Similar legal and lay actions have also contributed to greater sexual freedoms. The UK's Marriage (Same Sex) Couples Act 2013 recognized same-sex marriages as legal and requiring equal protection as opposite-sex marriages in England and Wales. In 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court followed suit and struck down all state-wide bans on same-sex marriage in the trial *Obergefell v. Hodges*. Moreover, while laws are not yet applicable at the national level, states across the U.S. have adopted laws prohibiting discrimination against transgender individuals in employment, housing, and public accommodations.¹²

These conversations and legal rulings regarding one's sexuality, sexual identity, and gender stand in stark contrast to the Victorian Era's understanding of sex and gender. British "class and gender hierarchies were safeguarded" and marriage and family "were perceived as pillars of morality and state order." As a consequence, "the two genders were assigned disparate and unwavering roles: while men were called to take an active part in public events, women were restricted to the domestic spheres" (Kitsi-Mitakou 28). While I will describe and analyze these binaries in my first chapter, here I want to emphasize that these structures, much like the court rulings in recent years, are political. Conan Doyle "believed in the relevance of politics to fiction" (Favor 398) and the same is true in the post-2010 adaptations under examination in this dissertation. As a product of popular culture, then, detective stories reflect "a nation's attitudes, fears, and hopes" (Favor 403). Thus, the Sherlock Holmes adaptations and appropriations I bring up all reflect Anglo-American concerns specifically, though certainly issues like gender equality

¹² Of course, such efforts are not U.S.-wide and debates at the national level concerning transgender individuals are controversial and come up against fierce opposition.

and sexual freedom are global concerns as well.¹³

I employ the term “Anglo-American” to frame these adaptations and appropriations for specific reasons. First and foremost, the Sherlock Holmes canon and its contemporaries and predecessors are the products of white, primarily male, authors.¹⁴ Thus, the canon participates in colonialism and Britain’s imperialist goals across the globe. The British Empire engaged in colonial conflicts such as “The Great Game” – a rivalry between the British Empire and Russia to retain influence and control over prosperous colonies, such as India (Walters 333). Such real-life developments found parallels in literature and foreign characters were “controlled, contained, and marginalized” (Favor 398). As I will explore in my first chapter, the Sherlock Holmes canon participates in this discourse of racism and colonialism. As such, “Anglo-American,” in one context, refers to this history of colonialism in which the Sherlock Holmes canon participated.

This term also refers to transatlanticism. Transatlanticism in the context of literary studies is the relationship of British and U.S. culture as explored in British and U.S. literature. My dissertation takes transatlanticism as an “arena” of “incursive geometries” per Andrew Taylor’s definition: “By imagining the transatlantic not as a static geographical area, but one in which the collision of materials generates new ways to conceive of that area in all its diversity, it is possible to effect a powerful critique of the ways in which literary study...has worked to enforce a false but seductive politics of exceptionalism or coherence” (Hughes et al. 920). Taylor’s definition

¹³ Indeed, Sherlock Holmes is adapted and appropriated on a global scale. For example, *Miss Sherlock* (2018) is an eight-episode television series produced by HBO Asia and Hulu Japan and features a female Sherlock (Sara “Sherlock” Shelly Futaba) and a female Watson (Wato Tachibana, or Wato-san). Russia has also adapted Sherlock Holmes; the television station Russia-1 created an eight-episode season Sherlock Holmes adaptation titled *Sherlok Kholms*, which premiered in November 2013.

¹⁴ However, not all detective fiction is white or male or even Anglo. For example, Chinese crime fiction has existed for two millennia and the term *gongan* (meaning ‘court case’) is general term for this ancient Chinese crime writing (Kinkly 73, 74). Additionally, Latin American detective fiction experienced a revival with Jorge Luis Borges and, while some authors employ the U.S. hard-boiled detective, these stories are adapted “to the Latin American reality and criminal nature of the state in most countries of the region” (Jacovkis 115, 117).

underscores transatlanticism's purpose to break down imperial narratives and, as such, takes into account varying experiences and agencies, as Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson notes in her article on transatlantic studies:

In relation specifically to literature, the transatlantic exchange has been figured in multiple ways, depending on motive, agency, and experience: crossing the ocean has very different meanings for the immigrant, the exile, the slave, the traveler, the tourist and the expatriate, though of course, for some, these designations overlap... The sense that the transatlantic offers *unfinished*, continuously evolving cultural encounters is paramount for our understanding of the journey; there is no *one kind* of transatlantic travel, and the basis on which the individual travels – whether it is compulsory or chosen, for leisure or immigration – impacts directly on the experience. (357-358)

In other words, while the transatlantic trade of peoples and ideas originated in imperialism and colonialism, this field now foregrounds intertextuality and I correspondingly emphasize how people of color have appropriated the Sherlock Holmes canon and its inherent racism and colonialism to provide space for historically “othered” voices to have significance and meaning. For example, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar incorporates his Trinidadian heritage into *Mycroft Holmes* and Brittany Cavallaro's Charlotte Holmes's best friend is Lena Gupta, a woman of color. Moreover, Lucy Liu's role as Joan Watson in CBS's *Elementary* combats racist stereotypes. Thus, transatlanticism as a facet of my dissertation underscores how this space “is a complex one that draws on a host of historical and cultural connections” (Macpherson 360), Sherlock Holmes being one of these complex connections.

Interpretive Frameworks

I utilize a range of methodologies in this dissertation and, while each chapter will point out those methods specific to it, here I would like to provide a general summary. Firstly, every chapter relies on adaptation studies as a lens of analysis. In its core definition, an adaptation is a text (film, television series, play, book, etc.) inspired by a previous text. Adapters are not simply

“ripping off” or copying a text but instead “have their own personal reasons for deciding first to do an adaptation and then choosing which adapted works and what medium to do it in” (Hutcheon 93). Adaptations, then, are unique products influenced by the adapter, and that adapter’s political, social, and cultural mores and opinions. This complexity means that adaptation studies is “a field engaged with process, ideology and methodology” (Sanders 24). Thus, “[t]he adapted text...is not something to be reproduced but rather something to be interpreted and recreated, often in a new medium” (Hutcheon 84). Each text under discussion in this dissertation is a reproduction of the Sherlock Holmes canon that represents a new interpretation of that canon and the adaptations themselves recreate without copying to form a new product. An adaptation’s significance, moreover, “depends upon an audience’s awareness of an explicit relationship to a source text” (Sanders 27). In choosing the Sherlock Holmes canon as the source text, each adaptation situates itself in relation to the Victorian Era and nineteenth-century literature.

Secondly, I utilize gender studies in various forms throughout my chapters. As I will explore in my first chapter, gender relations in Victorian England influenced literature, culture, and societal expectations for men and women. The Sherlock Holmes canon participates in and reflects Victorian gender norms and therefore its adaptations also engage with these norms. However, a norm is not a rule and I approach gender and sexuality as performed roles, most especially in my second chapter. Additionally, in specific instances this gender studies lens shifts to queer theory and the activity of queering to deconstruct historical analyses (Kirsch 33). Adaptations that queer characters and relationships in the Sherlock Holmes canon excavate new ground and more transgressive challenges to Anglo-American gender binaries.

Lastly, I utilize feminism as a lens and approach for analysis in many character and

textual analyses. As a lens, I employ feminism to examine how characters combat oppression on cultural, social, and political levels. More generally, I utilize a feminist approach to examine my primary sources. These adaptations often answer the question as to “how far feminism has gone in countering gender inequality” (Smith 9). My first chapter examines the “New Woman” from the Victorian Era and her efforts to challenge gender inequality in both literature and life. My second chapter’s exploration of the breakdown in gender binaries interacts with feminism regarding specific characters, such as *Elementary*’s Jamie Moriarty and *Sherlock*’s Mary Watson. While my third chapter focuses on the male-male homosocial bond in adaptation, I still employ a feminist methodology that focuses on social change and diversity. My fourth chapter in particular argues that two novel series produce radical, feminist re-interpretations of the Sherlock Holmes character in the form of a Neo-Victorian Lady Charlotte Holmes and a twenty-first-century teenaged Charlotte Holmes.

Furthermore, I employ specific terminologies in this dissertation. The style sheet appended to the close of this introduction details the names I utilize to distinguish between the various characters and primary sources. One such source is CBS’s *Elementary*. This U.S. television series features a British actor as Sherlock Holmes (Jonny Lee Miller) and an Asian-American actor as Dr. Joan Watson (Lucy Liu). Seasons 1-6 specifically take place in New York, where Sherlock and Watson share a brownstone; however, London is never far from Sherlock’s imagination and in Season 2’s first episode, “Step Nine,” Sherlock brings Watson to London to help Gareth Lestrade. That season, moreover, ends with Sherlock moving back to London and Watson staying in New York. When Season 3 picks up, Sherlock returns to New York with a new, British protégé. Season 6 ends with Sherlock and Watson relocating to London after Sherlock takes the blame for a murder he did not commit. When Season 7 picks up, Sherlock and

Watson travel back to New York from London to help the NYPD with a domestic terrorist.

As a U.S. adaptation of a canonic UK character, *Elementary* is an interesting transatlantic study in contrasts. Episodes, most especially their titles, closely follow the Sherlock Holmes canon: “The Hound of the Cancer Cells” (S2E18); “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (S2E21); “The Five Orange Pipz” (S3E2); “The Adventure of the Nutmeg Concoction” (S2E7); and “The Illustrious Client” (S3E11) are just a few examples. Despite *Elementary*’s extensive re-writing of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson’s relationship, the television series nevertheless situates itself inside the canon. Thus, *Elementary* is an adaptation that is first a formal entity or production that “is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work” (Hutcheon 7). *Elementary* clearly identifies itself as a Sherlock Holmes adaptation, but it comes not in the written word, but in the form of televised video. Second, *Elementary* is a process of creation: it re-interprets and re-creates the canon (Hutcheon 8). The result is a production that works to combat colonialism and promote a nuanced investigation of feminism.

CBS’s *Elementary*: A Study in Adaptation

To demonstrate my methodology in this dissertation, I conclude this introduction by illustrating that method in a compressed case study based on CBS’s *Elementary*. My analysis focuses on two tenets. First, in creating an adaptation that features a man as Holmes and a woman as Watson, *Elementary* participates in feminist discourse and, as a consequence, brings a woman character to share in Sherlock’s spotlight. This new relationship between Sherlock and Watson challenges not just Victorian gender roles but “passivity which has enabled the perpetuation of gender-roles” in twenty-first century media (Welch 144). This push-back against relying on traditional gender roles leads into my second point: casting an Asian-American actor

to play the role of Joan Watson challenges the racism inherent in the Sherlock Holmes canon and British imperialism. I specifically examine *Elementary*'s first season because these tenets develop together to culminate in the season finale, where Sherlock and Watson attain a symbiotic relationship that allows them to successfully take down Sherlock's nemesis, Jamie Moriarty.¹⁵

In CBS's drama, the canonic Sherlock Holmes's quirky seven percent cocaine solution balloons into a crippling addiction that culminates in Sherlock relocating to New York after a stint in rehabilitation for drug addiction. To ensure that his son does not relapse, Morland Holmes (John Noble) hires Joan Watson as Sherlock's "sober companion." Watson quit her medical career to become a sober companion after a man died on her operating table. As a companion, Watson lives with her clients for six weeks and helps them acclimate to a sober lifestyle. She attends Addicts Anonymous meetings with them, ensures they integrate back into society, and facilitates a permanent sponsor to take over after her tenure is up. However, this pattern is disrupted when Watson moves into Sherlock's brownstone. Sherlock discerns that Watson possesses qualities far better suited to that of detective and, when her six weeks are up, offers her a position as his protégé, or, as he frames it in "Details" (S1E6), "not as [a] sober companion, but as [a] companion." Season 1 follows Sherlock and Watson as they learn to navigate their professional and personal relationships as they shift from addict and sober companion to detective and protégé.

Joan Watson's presence in *Elementary* underscores a shift towards re-evaluating the Sherlock Holmes canon's treatment of women. As I will explore further in my subsequent chapters, the canon's treatment of women is varying; the one consistency is that women are always pushed out of the narrative. Mary Watson loses all significance after "The Sign of the

¹⁵ I will examine Jamie Moriarty in my second chapter.

Four”; Irene Adler makes a forceful but fleeting impression in “A Scandal in Bohemia”; and even bicycle-riding “New Woman” characters such as Violet Smith from “The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist” make only one-off appearances in the canon. Instead of following this precedent, *Elementary*’s Sherlock sees Watson’s intelligence and actively works to keep her in his life. Sherlock begins both his tenure with Watson and his consultation business with the New York Police Department as a bitter, alienating character. For example, when Joan moves into Sherlock’s brownstone in New York City, he refers to his new sober companion as “a glorified helper monkey” and as a further dig introduces her to Captain Gregson as his valet (S1E1). Sherlock invades Watson’s privacy on a regular basis: he breaks into her phone to arrange dates and family meetings and, if Watson is taking too long to get ready in the morning, rifles in her closet and picks out her outfits. Joan does not passively accept such treatment and pushes back against Sherlock’s actions. She doggedly pursues him to attend his support meetings and challenges his authority. A feminist reading of this relationship might hypothesize that, while not necessarily equals, Watson’s refusal to let a male character dominate her life imbues her with an activity that actively combats passivity often seen in female characters on screen or in print.

This analysis of Sherlock and Watson’s relationship emphasizes my dissertation’s argument that the adaptations and appropriations I have selected exhibit varying levels of success in combating gender norms. Unlike the canonic Holmes, who relies solely on his own intellect and never learns from his Watson,¹⁶ cases in *Elementary* rely on Sherlock learning from Watson. For example, in “Child Predator” (S1E3), Sherlock listens to Watson when she instructs him on her squat exercises, which she used in medical school to stay awake all night when studying. Sherlock copies Watson’s lead and he is therefore able to stay up all night and come up with a

¹⁶ I will explain and examine this dynamic in more detail in my first and fourth chapters.

significant lead in the investigation of a child murderer. Sherlock also accepts and listens to Watson's medical expertise. He admires her precision during a covert autopsy in "A Landmark Story" (S1E21) and gives her just as much credit as he gives himself in solving a Russian spy case in "Dirty Laundry" (S1E11). Sherlock's ability to appreciate Watson draws viewers' attention to her qualities that round her out as a character. Such attention emphasizes that Watson "is a real woman in a real role" (Welch 143) and her character extends beyond her role as Sherlock's companion. The viewer meets Watson's family in "The Leviathan" (S1E10) and an ex-boyfriend in "You Do It to Yourself" (S1E9). The family reunion that Sherlock facilitates in "Leviathan" emphasizes that he "respects that [Watson's] life does not revolve around him" (Welch 143). Indeed, Watson's character development outside her relationship with Sherlock creates a more complex John Watson adaptation.

Simply changing a character's gender does not automatically create a feminist argument and "the choice to change John to Joan would fall terribly short should it not follow through with...[the] characterization of Dr. Joan Watson within the series" (Welch 143). As I have previously shown, Joan Watson is a combative and intelligent character whose sole purpose is not to record Sherlock's cases. Moreover, Sherlock not only acknowledges Watson's intelligence, but encourages her to pursue her gut instincts regarding their personal and professional lives. For example, in "Lesser Evils" (S1E5), Watson runs into an old friend from her days as a doctor. When the friend, still a practicing doctor, asks Watson to come see a patient, Watson disagrees with her friend's diagnosis. Sherlock pushes Watson to pursue this instinct because he has total faith in her intuition and intelligence. When Watson covertly requests a test that proves her friend did misdiagnosis the young patient, Sherlock is proven correct in his faith in his sober companion. Sherlock also encourages Watson to take on a case of

her own in “You Do It to Yourself”: Watson’s ex-boyfriend, a drug addict, has been arrested for a hit-and-run. Watson believes he was framed and while Sherlock provides Watson with guidance and encouragement, Watson is ultimately the one who solves the case. This reciprocal and affective relationship creates a new Holmes-Watson dynamic: “Together, the pair emphasiz[e] the importance of professional camaraderie through a friendship which bridge[s] both the social and working worlds” (Welch 136).

Such a relationship between detective and protégé differs significantly from the homosocial relationship between Conan Doyle’s Holmes and Watson and from the clichéd heterosexual man-heterosexual woman romantic relationship that invariably arises from those two characters working in close quarters. Watson and Sherlock both live sexual lives but these lives are their own. Unlike his progenitor, Sherlock is a sexual creature who utilizes sex to function at an optimal level, as he informs Watson when they first meet (S1E1). Watson, too, has a personal, sexual life. However, their relationship with one another never becomes sexual (even in subsequent seasons). This significant point pushes back against the attitude “perpetuated by the media which has long stood firm in its stance that interactions between heterosexual men and women, placed upon equal planes of importance, are inherently sexual” (Welch 138). Moreover, Watson’s agency in turn creates a Sherlock Holmes character who represents not a hegemonic social order, but one attuned to shifts in gender equality. When news of *Elementary*’s choice to cast a woman as the John Watson figure reached the public, the outrage was palpable and brought up issues regarding sex and equality between men and women.¹⁷ As Elizabeth Welch

¹⁷ As a related comment: Lucy Liu’s race also carries weight in the relationship between canon and adaptation. As I will address in my first chapter, Britain during the Victorian Era colonized much of Africa, Asia, and India, instituting colonial rule and both fetishizing and vilifying the East. Casting Lucy Liu, a Chinese-American actor, in the role of Joan Watson signals a push-back against racial stereotypes and prejudices found not just in Victorian society, but specifically in the Sherlock Holmes canon.

comments in her article defending Joan Watson, “[b]y sheer virtue of her gender, she had been judged as unfit and has distastefully been begrudged the position as Holmes’s companion” (137). Moreover, Lucy Liu is not just a female actor, but an Asian-American one, too. CBS’s choice to cast a woman of color as Sherlock Holmes’s partner works against not just detective fiction’s history as an exophobic genre, but specifically against the Sherlock Holmes canon’s racist elements. As a part of its imperialistic agenda, Victorian Britain endorsed the belief that human races were separate and specifically that “whites were superior – mentally, morally, and often physically – to nonwhites” (Steinbach 61). I will examine race and power relations in more detail in my first chapter, but such a point is relevant here because Lucy Liu’s presence as an assertive and intelligent woman of color resists not just historical gender relations, but Anglo-American racism.

The shifts between the Sherlock Holmes canon and *Elementary* emphasize the canon’s malleability, and this expanded canon “relishes¹⁸ in embracing the culture and society to which it is being presented and it does not shy away from liberally playing with the stories’ characters to suit its audience” (Welch 139).

Conclusion

The Sherlock Holmes canon “has become something to be negotiated, rather than followed to the letter; always hauntingly present but, over time, sidestepped with ever-greater frequency” (McCaw 47). I have ordered my chapters to follow this increased inclination to negotiation rather than more fidelity-conscious or “authentic” adaptation.

¹⁸ The word “relish” in particular emphasizes the playful re-working of the canon in the primary sources I examine in this dissertation.

Chapter 1 summarizes and examines gender relationships in the Victorian Era and how the social construct of “separate spheres” applied not only to Victorian society and its literature, but specifically to the characters and character dynamics of the Sherlock Holmes canon. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson exemplified the ideal masculine homosocial relationship that both participated in and reinforced gender and sexuality as distinct, discreet elements in society. Thus, in this chapter I examine gender roles (and by extension sexuality) and how those roles played out in society, literature, and the Sherlock Holmes canon. Moreover, I further emphasize the nuances in the canon and how its inclusion of “New Woman” characters reveals Conan Doyle’s more progressive views of women’s rights. I then widen my scope to examine other significant, related social constructs, like race. These constructs all take place inside a version of Michel Foucault’s panopticon, of which Sherlock Holmes acts as an active regulatory agent. As a whole, then, this chapter indicates that the canon does not wholly endorse strict gender codes (though it does utilize harmful racial and ethnic stereotypes); subtleties exist in character and character dynamics that indicate the detective genre’s ability not just to reflect social constructs, but also to challenge them. I conclude this chapter with an argument for a more nuanced and critical evaluation of the Sherlock Holmes canon with an eye both to its progressiveness and conservatism.

Chapter 2 turns to secondary characters in post-2010 adaptations whose greater roles and more developed storylines emphasize negotiation rather than textual fidelity. The characters I examine, which are adaptations of the canonic Mrs. Hudson, Mary Watson, Irene Adler, and Professor James Moriarty, investigate twenty-first-century conceptions of gender and sexuality. Thus, this chapter approaches gender as a performed role defined through social norms (Butler

52).¹⁹ These characters are united in their fluid performances of gender and sexuality and break the gender binary and its norms. While some characters are more successful than others in denaturalizing the gender apparatus, each embodies social and cultural challenges to binary structures that equate “male” with “masculine” and “female” with “feminine.”

Chapter 3 examines Sherlock Holmes adaptations that maintain the male-male relationship between Holmes and Watson to re-interpret and negotiate changing relationships between and among men. In short, the Victorian homosocial bond shifts to various forms of the bromance in the adaptations under discussion in this chapter. The adaptations do not accept Holmes’s asexuality (as described by Watson in the canon) and instead queer the Holmes-Watson relationship. These adaptations are Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* film franchise, BBC’s *Sherlock* television series, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse’s novel *Mycroft Holmes*, and Bill Condon’s *Mr. Holmes* film. In sum, I propose that these adaptations align with masculinity not as a hegemonic identity but as a “changeable continuum” (Horlacher 10). Inside this continuum, the homosocial bond transforms into something more affective, emotive, and vulnerable. And yet, the fact that none of these bromance-style relationships slip on the continuum over into homosexuality emphasizes heteronormativity as a controlling agent in Anglo-American society.

Chapter 4 turns to two twenty-first-century female authors who have transformed Sherlock Holmes into *Charlotte Holmes*. These two novelists appropriate the Sherlock Holmes

¹⁹I must make a comment regarding the framework of my second chapter. I utilize Judith Butler’s methodology for understanding gender and sexuality to craft my secondary character analyses. In 2017, a Title IX investigation found Avital Ronnell, a Comparative Literature professor and renowned feminist at New York University, guilty of sexual harassment of her male graduate student, Nimrod Reitman. Judith Butler came to Ronnell’s aid in a letter to N.Y.U. stating that she and other professors and academics who signed the letter had worked with Ronnell for years and that Reitman’s Title IX claims were nothing more than a pernicious campaign. This defense echoes other defenses of powerful men, such as Weinstein (Greenberg). While Butler’s contributions to academia and gender study are influential and significant, her defense of Ronnell is disheartening and I do not endorse such a defense.

character for the purpose of promoting and exploring feminism and women-centered stories, a sharp disconnect from the canon itself and its backgrounding of women. Sherry Thomas's *Lady Sherlock* series has a Neo-Victorian setting with Lady Charlotte Holmes and Mrs. Watson; Brittany Cavallaro's *Charlotte Holmes* series takes place in present-day Connecticut at the Sherringford boarding school with Charlotte Holmes and Jamie Watson. To frame this chapter analysis, I ask the question, "How do these two series engage with feminism?" The answers to this question intersect with feminism, gender studies (specifically queer theory) and adaptation studies. I focus my examination on two contexts: the Charlotte Holmes characters themselves and their relationships with their Watsons and other significant secondary characters. Together, Thomas and Cavallaro create radical, feminist appropriations of the Sherlock Holmes canon.

My conclusion is my own appropriation of the Sherlock Holmes canon. This story takes place as a parallel to "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (December 1891). Rather than follow Sherlock Holmes and John Watson on a case, "The Adventure of the Elephant Figurine" follows Mary Watson, psychic detective, on a case regarding the vindictive spirit of a dead husband. I wrote "Elephant Figurine" as a contribution to the feminist appropriations of the Sherlock Holmes canon and my Author's Note at the end situates it not just in relation to the canon, but inside my dissertation and the adaptations I examine as well.

Style Sheet

This style sheet outlines the various terms/abbreviations/phrasings that I'll be using for this dissertation. I feel this sheet is particularly significant because I'll be discussing a variety of Sherlock Holmes-John Watson relationships and a wide variety of novels/movies/television series.

Character Names

Sherlock Holmes-John Watson

I will refer to teach Holmes-Watson team according to how the pair address one another in the movies/television series. I will also use 'Holmes-Watson' when referring to Conan Doyle's canon and examining the Holmes-Watson homosocial relationship in a theoretical/holistic context.

Holmes-Watson: Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011)

Sherlock-Watson: CBS's *Elementary*

Sherlock-John: BBC's *Sherlock*

Mycroft-Douglas: Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse's *Mycroft Holmes*

Irene Adler

This character's name takes a different variant depending on adaptation, too. When referring to her in Doyle's original story, I will use 'Ms. Adler.'

Miss Adler or Adler: BBC's *Sherlock*

Irene or Adler: CBS's *Elementary*

Irene: Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011)

Mrs. Hudson

This character only has one variant.

Mrs. Hudson: Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011); BBC's *Sherlock*

Miss Hudson: CBS's *Elementary*

Professor Moriarty

This character's changes in nomenclature arises from his shifting professional status. When referring to Professor Moriarty in Doyle's stories, I will refer to him as 'Professor Moriarty.'

Professor Moriarty: Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011)

Jamie Moriarty: CBS's *Elementary*

Jim Moriarty: BBC's *Sherlock*

Mary Watson

This character's name does not change depending on adaptation, so I will always refer to her as 'Mary Watson.' I do so, too, both before and after her marriage to John Watson because her married name is more recognizable and consistent than her maiden name (Morstan).

Additionally, her identity is so explicitly connected to her married life that keeping 'Watson' as a last name seems the easiest route.

Shortcuts and Abbreviations

Episodes

When referring to specific episodes, I will use an abbreviation for season number and episode number. For example: Season 3, Episode 3 of *Sherlock* will be shortened to S3E3.

I will also identify episodes by their proper titles with the shortcut in parentheses whenever I want to create some variety in my vocabulary. For example: In "Corpse De Ballet" (S2E15) Mary Watson expresses her incredulity over Sherlock's sexual relationship with a possible suspect.

Novels

I will shorten the titles of my chosen novels on occasion to avoid creating overly wordy sentences, especially when discussing one or two novels at length and in specific detail.

Thomas's *A Study in Scarlet Women* will shorten to *Scarlet Women*

Thomas's *A Conspiracy in Belgravia* will shorten to *Conspiracy*

Cavallaro's *A Study in Charlotte* will shorten to *Study*

Cavallaro's *The Last of August* will shorten to *August*

Abdul-Jabbar's *Mycroft Holmes* will remain the same

Horowitz's *The House of Silk* will shorten to *Silk*

Chapter One

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Victorian Panopticon

“There has been murder done, and the murderer was a man. He was more than six feet high, was in the prime of his life, had small feet for his height, wore coarse, square-toed boots and smoked a Trichinopoly cigar.” – Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)

In many ways, the Sherlock Holmes legacy would have disappointed its author, who hoped to create a lasting impression as a writer of serious historical novels.²⁰ The literary community, instead, overwhelmingly remembers Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for his stories concerning 221B Baker Street. In 1893, Conan Doyle described Sherlock Holmes as “a sort of nightmare – an old man of the sea about my neck. If I don’t kill him soon he’ll kill me” (qtd. in Barsham 99). And, in fact, Conan Doyle did kill his consulting detective in “The Adventure of the Final Problem” in the December 1893 edition of *The Strand Magazine* (according to Henry Lunn,²¹ Conan Doyle said, “I have made up my mind to kill Sherlock Holmes; he is becoming such a burden to me that it makes my life unbearable” [qtd. in Lycett 203]). However, readers would not allow the detective and doctor to rest in peace, and Conan Doyle brought back the pair with “The Adventure of the Empty House” in October 1903. This resurrection reveals and anticipates the enduring popularity of Sherlock Holmes and his importance to Anglo-American culture, a popularity the consulting detective enjoys to this day.

This chapter examines Conan Doyle’s most popular creation and the consulting detective’s significance as a marker of cultural and social norms during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a methodology, I will use Annette Kolodny’s idea of “playful

²⁰ Andrew Lycett brings up this point frequently in his biography, *The Man who Created Sherlock Holmes: The Life and Times of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (2007). For example, Lycett points out that Conan Doyle wished to move on from Sherlock Holmes after the publication of *A Study in Scarlet* and create “the great British historical novel he had been contemplating for some time” (141), which was *Micah Clark*. Additionally, after publishing *The Valley of Fear*, Conan Doyle told his publisher Greenhough Smith that he wished to devote himself “to some serious literary or historical work” (qtd. in Lycett 371) instead of his consulting detective.

²¹ Henry Lunn, a former missionary, owned a travel firm that Conan Doyle hired to travel to Lucerne in 1892.

pluralism,” which relies on “an acute and impassioned *attentiveness* to the ways in which primarily male structures of power are inscribed...within our literary inheritance” to reach “a better understanding of the past [and] an improved reordering of the present and future as well” (489-90). These structures of masculine power manipulated social and cultural conceptions of gender, sexuality, and race. This method, furthermore, exposes what Judith Butler identifies as “regulatory regimes” focused on a heterosexual idea of gender that society can never fully realize:

...the naturalistic effects of heterosexualized genders are not produced through imitative strategies; what they imitate is a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its effect. In this case, the ‘reality’ of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the group of all imitations. In other words, heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself – *and failing*. (“Imitation and Gender Insubordination” 716)

This methodological framework charts historical understandings of not just gender and sexuality, but also race, and establishes a format for examining the post-2010 Sherlock Holmes adaptations and their successful and unsuccessful confrontations with contemporary understandings of these social constructs, which is my overall purpose in this dissertation. In the context of this chapter, I define a successful confrontation as a provocative challenge to these constructs, even if the challenge contains flaws; I define an unsuccessful confrontation as a strict adherence to social and cultural norms. As a result, this chapter underscores how the popularity of the Sherlock Holmes canon affected not just nineteenth and twentieth century readers, but the detective genre up to the twenty-first century.

I first contextualize Conan Doyle’s consulting detective within Victorian social and cultural developments and conflicts, specifically those of gender and sexuality. Conan Doyle’s

consulting detective gained popularity amid Victorian²² gender battles in an ostensibly codified social system of separate spheres. It is within the Sherlock Holmes canon that British readers could find comfort in the maintenance of socially-constructed gender binaries and still take part in social developments, such as the increase in women's rights. My analysis starts with gender roles for women in domestic, political, economic, and literary contexts and then shifts to study how the social constructions regulated by these gender roles affected the Sherlock Holmes canon. I then transition into the larger examination of masculinity and its construction in not just Victorian England but also the Sherlock Holmes canon's primary characters. This examination, in turn, leads to an investigation of race and the significance of Sherlock Holmes's whiteness in the context of Victorian power structures. This chapter concludes with a reflection concerning how the codification of the detective story (starting with the Sherlock Holmes canon and characterizing subsequent narratives) created a tradition of observation and cisgenderism in this genre that, until quite recently, overwhelmingly worked to enforce, rather than challenge, gender binaries. As a result, this chapter argues for a more nuanced and critical understanding of the Sherlock Holmes canon that emphasizes both the canon's progressiveness and its conservatism. This ambivalence, in turn, underscores detective fiction's significance as a popular genre that both reflects and challenges Western society's understanding of not just gender and sexuality, but also race and other social and cultural conversations.

Victorians and their Gender Codes

Strict gender roles built Victorian society and dictated individuals' actions. Ben Griffin identifies this thought pattern as "Victorian domestic ideology," the subject of this section.

²² This significance also applies to the Edwardian and Georgian eras, too, and at times my analysis will bleed into those time periods as well.

Domestic ideology placed the nuclear family at the center of all gender relations and therefore represented the ideal gender system, which operated under the assumption “that men would always use their domestic authority wisely [and] that a wife would happily submit to her husband’s wishes” (Griffin 38). This hierarchy between husband and wife is captured in the idea of separate spheres, a doctrine “that men and women inhabited different roles in society. Men were essentially public creatures; women were private creatures” (Steinbach 133). This concept of separate spheres labeled the woman as an “angel in the house” or “hot house flower” (Godfrey 4) whose place was out of the public’s eye and its streets. As members of the public sphere, men, on the other hand, went out of the house to work and engage in economic activities.

“Gender” is the social construction of sex “where the dyad of biology (male/female) meets the continuum of culture (masculine to feminine to everything in between)” and Victorians generally adhered to the assertion that “gender was...the natural expression of biological truths, the immutable laws that governed private and public life” (E. Allen 402-3). In other words, the Victorians (and Anglo-American society until the twenty-first-century²³) considered gender and sex as one and the same conception. In this section, I historicize gender debates in terms of their political, social, and literary significance. I begin with the “angel in the house” and identify her regulated roles and boundaries as a part of Victorian domestic ideology and examine where this ideology met with resistance. This debate on a woman’s role in society covers social, cultural, political, and economic spheres and therefore necessitates an in-depth analysis because women were so closely involved in these spheres. I close this section by including a discussion of the Victorian “New Woman,” a term and figure who directly challenges the dominant Victorian

²³ While academia has debated this difference between gender and sexuality since the 1980s, only in the past few years has this debate reached Anglo-American popular culture. And, despite efforts to be more inclusive to trans individuals, popular culture and society at large still struggles to understand gender as a separate entity to sex.

social and cultural mores governing definitions of “womanhood.” After this examination, I discuss Victorian concepts of masculinity and “manliness” to demonstrate and add to this historical picture of the “profound, complex, and variegated” (Steinbach 132) effect gender had over Victorian society.

The “Angel in the House”

A woman’s sexuality and her appropriate role in life consumed Victorian society and continues to fascinate academics. To craft a more comprehensive understanding of both the “angel in the house” and her counterpart, the “New Woman,” I draw from both Victorian and twentieth and twenty-first century sources. As Lydia Murdoch states, the “Victorian ideal of womanhood envisioned the bourgeois, Anglo-Saxon woman as chaste, pure, innocent, and uncorrupted by worldly and material desires” (134).²⁴ This “true woman was a noble creature, without selfish ambition but driven to serve others” (E. Allen 403). Victorian author Sarah Stickney Ellis supports such claims about womanhood in her influential conduct books, *The Women of England, their Social Duties and Domestic Habits* (1839); *The Daughters of England, their Position in Society, Character and Responsibility* (1842); *The Wives of England, their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations* (1843); and *The Mothers of England, their Influence and Responsibility* (1843). Ellis’s father encouraged her to read widely and she went into her marriage with William Ellis as an established author whose authorial identity did not conflict with her conception of womanhood. Her influential works concerning women’s place in Victorian patriarchal society emphasized the “moral influence” of the

²⁴ Of note here is the concept of lesbianism. While not formally acknowledged and punished in the same manner as male homosexuality, “doctors and moralists warned that girls might learn dangerous sexual practices from boarding schools and governesses” (Murdoch 139-140). While physical intimacy between women was often heralded as “sisterly love and female friendship,” lesbianism and same-sex desire was often associated with the “New Woman” (Murdoch 138, 141).

Christian wife and mother (Twycross-Martin). Indeed, one of Mrs. Ellis's first mandates to a new bride is "to be in all things the opposite of eccentric":

Her character, if she had any, will develop itself in time; and nothing can be gained, though much may be lost, by exhibiting its peculiarities before they are likely to be candidly understood. In being unobtrusive, quiet, impartially polite to all, and willing to bend to circumstances, consists the great virtue of a bride; and though to sink, even for a short time, into an apparent nonentity, may be a little humbling to one who has occupied a distinguished place amongst her former friends, the prudent woman will be abundantly repaid, by being thus enabled to make her own observations upon the society and the circumstances around her, to see what pleasant paths she may with safety pursue, or what opportunities are likely to open for a fuller development of her powers, either natural or acquired. (*Wives* 19)

Society, as evidenced in deportment manuals, believed a woman's purpose was, therefore, reliant on a man's purposes: the home was a man's refuge, a place to contemplate God and forget the "sinfulness of the public sphere" (Griffin 41). In other words, women were "to make those homes comfortable and inviting refuges from the rough and tumble world of business and commerce" (Steinbach 134). Any arguments or marital struggles signified a wife's failure to attain a "perfect unity of heart and mind" and represented therefore a "violation of the domestic peace" (Griffin 42). Consequently, the model of Victorian womanhood erased, or at the very least, severely stunted a woman's ability to develop her own ideas or personalities independent from a man's desires.

Additionally, the wife was not supposed to venture outside of her domestic circle and its daily duties (organizing meals, keeping house, paying calls, etc.). Ellis advises a wife to perform these duties "*heartily*" so that "she may most effectually prove to her husband how entirely she considers her destiny, with all its hopes, and all its anxieties, to be identified with his" (*Wives* 71). While a husband could easily pass between the public and private spheres, his wife needed to remain in her place to better take care of the home. As Susie L. Steinbach so succinctly states, "Men were fundamentally independent; women were dependent" (133).

These assigned rules for gender worked to contain a woman's sexuality (Dever 159). For Victorians, "femininity" meant "dependence, subordinate status, domesticity, and sexual modesty" (Steinbach 133). These characterizations oriented a woman's life around the house and the production of children. As Judith Flanders explains, not fulfilling such a role was unacceptable: "Women who remained unmarried had failed to fulfill their destiny, both biologically and psychologically" (214). By associating sexuality with a woman's reproductive system, the Victorian patriarchy justified women's role in the domestic sphere as a natural state (Dever 162). By this same reasoning, a woman participating in the public sphere risked the "threat of sexual danger, and the humiliating possibility of being mistaken for a prostitute"; therefore, "respectable women's spatial freedoms were curtailed by a sense of lurking danger" (Steinbach 17-18). These cultural myths regarding women and their place in the domestic sphere stifled their political and economic influence.

The idea of separate spheres and gender divisions aggressively influenced the Victorian middle class and its values (Steinbach 125). The middle class first emerged in the eighteenth century but grew exponentially in the nineteenth: by 1851, this class made up almost one-quarter of Britain's population and by 1871 the number of British middle-class families had doubled (118). This growth is significant because the British Empire relied on this newly-acquired middle-class gender system to "reproduce children, nation, empire, and ideology" (E. Allen 403). Therefore, because middle-class Victorian society "praised married women's power within the home to create a moral foundation for society," she lacked legal rights, creating a dependency to her husband that most closely resembled "a child to a father" (Murdoch 81). Specifically, a woman was at a considerable disadvantage when pushing back against and challenging social hierarchical constructions based on sexual identity and gender roles. (For example, it was not

until the Married Women's Property Act of 1882 that a married woman retained rights to own and control her own property.) Additionally, gender roles curtailed women's employment opportunities. Ideally, middle-class women did not work; as stated previously, her commitments were her husband, her home, and her children. From childhood, a girl learned from social and cultural standards that she was to grow up to become "the comfort-giver, whose primary function was to ensure the smooth running of the home, for the benefit of the man [her husband] who financed it" (Flanders 99).

And yet, political and economic barriers, such as an inability to vote, did not mean women were completely powerless. Murdoch emphasizes that a more nuanced examination of Victorian familial relationships underscores instability in the idea of separate spheres. For example, "the relatively late average age of first marriage – fluctuating around 25 or 26 for women from 1850 to 1900 – meant that many women came to their partners with already formed interests and ambitions." These fully-formed women emphasize Murdoch's point that "the ideals of separate spheres and domesticity were always being challenged and negotiated" (81). So, while key figures like Sarah Stickney Ellis and Isabella Beeton²⁵ might represent the hegemonic separation of domestic and public, the actual practice of separate spheres did not go unchallenged. Additionally, while "not having women engage in paid labor became a key attribute of middle-class status" (Murdoch 80), women were not devoid of *all* economic power. As part of their domestic duties, women planned meals, organized parties, and bought or supervised the purchase of goods for the household. Meal planning and preparation "directly involved women in commercial society" because they possessed this purchasing power. And,

²⁵ Isabella Beeton (1836-1865) was a writer on household management and a journalist. She wrote *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (1861) and helped her husband, Samuel Orchart Beeton (1831-1877), edit the *English Woman's Domestic Magazine*.

considering the nation's status as an imperial power, buying foodstuffs also brought women "into direct engagement with the global economy" (Murdoch 101). And yet, one can argue that buying foodstuffs is not equal to the right to vote.

Although Victorian society systematically disempowered women by publishing department books, curtailing women's rights, and discouraging women from certain activities, several governmental reforms increased those rights. Perhaps some of the most influential developments were the Married Women's Property Bills, which gave women rights to their property and children. Arguments against these reforms did not center so much on a woman's increased ability to enter the public sphere as on what Lord Penzance referred to as "discord and separation" in the household (Griffin 37). A woman could not align herself to her husband's needs if she could also operate outside of his authority. However, these reservations did not stop a rising demand for women's rights. For example, the creation of the Divorce Court in 1857 began a larger movement to give women greater access to divorce. The 1857 act specifically moved divorce cases from ecclesiastical courts to civil ones, providing more citizens access to divorce. In performing this separation, the act exposed the extent of domestic abuse in not just the lower classes, but the upper and middle ones as well (Griffin 71). Debates in Parliament concerning the 1886 Married Women (Maintenance in Case of Desertion) Act centered on a working-class woman's need for protection against a negligent husband (Griffin 86). As a final example, the 1881 Maintenance of Children Care Bill gave a wife the ability to sue her husband if he was not providing for his children. Some Victorian politicians opposed this bill because "it created a mechanism by which a wife might use the courts to overrule her husband's wishes" (Griffin 44). In other words, this bill (and the others cited here) upset that cultural idea of submission on behalf of the wife to her husband's patriarchal authority. These debates, then,

reveal not two distinct opinions on women's rights and the extent of patriarchal authority, but rather "the degree of reform which [MPs] considered compatible with retaining some degree of male authority" (Griffin 90).

Of course, assigned domestic roles and their political, social, and cultural implications took place under the rule of Queen Victoria, a *woman* monarch in her own right (and without a political equal, as her husband, Albert, was Prince Consort during his lifetime). By the time Victoria and Albert married in 1837, "home and family had become central values of the expanding middle class" (Murdoch 73). Queen Victoria's rule represented both a maintenance in social norms and an increased attention to women's conditions. For example, the queen was the first monarch to utilize chloroform to reduce the pain of childbirth. This new drug caused controversy because it took away women's childbirth pains, which directly contradicted the Christian Bible's call for women to suffer as Eve did in childbirth (Flanders 54). At the same time, Prince Albert remained the paterfamilias for the royal family: he decided how to raise the children, for example, and worked to modernize the monarchy. The Queen's abhorrence of the increasingly vocal calls for women's suffrage (Matthew and Reynolds) complemented her deference to her husband regarding their home life. Therefore, Queen Victoria's rule is perhaps aptly described in this context as a paradox that reflected Victorian society's conflicting opinions regarding women's rights.

As a consequence of these growing criticisms surrounding the separate spheres ideology, the idea of the domestic sphere began to collapse at the end of the nineteenth century (Griffin 38). Simply put, these strict gender roles could not stop the tide of rebellion present in women's social, economic, and political situations. As this analysis thus far has demonstrated, by the arrival of the twentieth century "the ideology that had justified depriving women of legal rights

for most of the previous century had been exposed as intellectually bankrupt” (Griffin 110). The Victorian “New Woman,” a concept that represented sexual freedom and agency in contrast to the “angel in the house’s” demure femininity and strict domesticity, embodied this rebellion.

The "New Woman"

The Victorian New Woman defied strict definition: she could be a mother or wife, for example, but also an educator, a professional worker, or reformer. One role did not automatically exclude or include another. And, while authors “immediately capitalized on what became an often derogatory and stereotypical image of a bicycle-riding, cigarette-smoking, rational clothes-wearing, often mannish woman” (Sellers 109), the real-life New Woman was a symbol of rebellion against the social creation of the domestic sphere. A product of the 1890s, this woman was first identified as a phenomenon by *The Woman’s Herald* in its article, “The Social Standing of the New Woman,” and she quickly consumed public interest and unearthed tensions in the gender binaries that Victorian society held on to so tightly. For feminist newspapers and journals,²⁶ the New Woman “was not the mannish and overly sexualized New Woman popularized in novels and mainstream periodicals of the 1890s but a symbol of a new female political identity that promised to improve and reform English society” (Tusan 170, 169). Authors such as Ouida and Sarah Grand argued over the New Woman’s significance (for example, Grand’s essay, “The New Aspects of the Woman Question,” in *North American Review*

²⁶ The importance of the periodical press in Victorian England cannot be overstated and feminists took full advantage of this system. As Phillipa Levine notes, “From the mid-1850s onward, the various wings of the English feminist movement were able to put to profitable use the thriving market for periodicals in Victorian society. From the first publication of the *English Woman’s Journal (EWJ)* in the spring of 1858, at least one and more often a broad range of women’s periodicals gave public voice to feminist opinion” (293). These journals included the *Woman’s Herald*, *Women’s Suffrage Journal*, and *Englishwoman’s Review (EWR)*. As a whole, the feminist press “publicised and discussed women’s issues, and allowed women an actively separate literary space” to “offer a subtle challenge to canonic literary and journalistic assumptions” (Levine 299-300).

[Ardis 2, 10] contradicts Ouida's argument deriding the New Woman)²⁷ and their contentious essays exemplify how the New Woman's virtues were controversial and praised just as often as decried. Nat Arling's "What is the Role of the 'New Woman?'" from *Westminster Review* (November 1898) applauds the New Woman for her devotion to "the cause of right and justice, to make head against evil, to help the fallen, to raise her own sex to the highest level it can attain"; in particular, this figure "wishes to make marriage no longer an auction" and bring motherhood away from a "dreaded, and despised" state to one of "recognition and honour" (576). Marriage, it seems, was no longer a metaphorical prison. These phrases of praise exemplify the New Woman's purposeful resistance against gender norms. However, strong-worded derision from critics more often than not tempered such praise. One argument against the New Woman was her individualism: as "An American Observer" points out in "The Weak Points of the New Woman" for *The Review of Reviews* (1910), "Women are learning that they have a duty to themselves. The family is secondary, the individual comes first" (335). In this critic's mind, therefore, the New Woman sacrificed her commitment to family in search of personal self-worth.

The New Woman's most vehement critic was Mrs. Elizabeth Lyon Linton. In Linton's article "Nearing the Rapids" for *The New Review* (March 1894), she underscores the need for keeping "womanly" ideology and not intruding on man's domain. She goes so far as to encourage women to stay in the home, noting, "Hitherto we have been one of the most masculine people in Europe, as masculine as were ever the old Romans; free from hysterics, from the histrionic element, from vapouring, from silly vanities" (303). She lashes out at the New Woman

²⁷ *North American Review* is an American magazine first published in 1815; this interplay between Irish feminist Sarah Grand writing in an American magazine and a French-British writer responding in a British periodical underscores the transatlantic influence of the New Woman.

and the subsequent calls for expanded women's rights as bringing the nation to "disgrace" because giving women the right to vote will upset the natural balance: "What society wants in its women is a race of beings to supplement the short-comings of the men, each sex being the complement of the other" (Linton 302, 310). The New Woman's support of advances such as the right to vote, increased access to education, and further equality in marriage threatened this idea of balance. Additionally, to use Margaret Oliphant's terminology, the New Woman (and her novels) was often "anti-marriage" because "[she] reject[s] both the familiar patterning of the marriage plot and the cultural endorsement of marriage" (Ardis 60-61).²⁸ For a homosocial society that built patriarchal bonds over the bodies of women,²⁹ marriage was an essential social structure. The New Woman fought to "challenge not only the bourgeois Victorian social order's prescriptive definition of 'correct' female behaviour but also the pattern of thinking in hierarchically organized binary oppositions" that pitted "good women" against "fallen" women (Ardis 27). Therefore, as these primary sources indicate, "the New Woman refuses to be assimilated into the iconography of Victorian 'Womanhood'" (Ardis 27). By the end of the nineteenth century, "Victorians could avoid no longer the conclusion that the challenge of the movement for the freedom of women had become at least a challenge on sexual issues" because this movement "induced...a fresh consciousness and acknowledgment of individual sexual motivation in human relationships" (Fernando 23). These New Woman characters exhibit this consciousness of individual motivation, and act according to their own interests rather than society's expectations. And Victorian novelists, including Conan Doyle, could not help but comment on this new character.

²⁸ The "New Woman" was not well-received by other significant and influential British women. Figures such as Sarah Stickney Ellis and Sarah Lewis had crafted public images by "codify[ing] the rules with persuasive cogency" (Bell 88) and the New Woman threatened their influence and standing.

²⁹ I will provide a closer examination of the homosocial bond later in this chapter.

Women & Victorian Novels

Victorian novelists examined and confronted gender debates in their works. As Carolyn Dever notes, the Victorian novel's significance was its status as the work "of the imagination rather than social documentation. Thus [these novels] preserve the privilege of *questioning* culture rather than describing it; even in realist fictions, their responsibility is to the conundrum, not to the solution" (164). These novels turned a critical eye to the implementation of and adherence to gender relations, specifically in regards to containing sexuality:

Victorian novels offer a paradox. The marriage plot is the dominant form of literary fiction in this period, and it is a plot concerned both with the expression of sexual desire and with its limitation within comfortable, familiar social boundaries. In the medium of the marriage plot, direct expressions of sexual desire...are the exception to the rule: the genre more often displaces sexuality into conventions of romance and domesticity. Sexuality, therefore, emerges primarily in disguised and coded terms, and by means of displacement rather than express representation. (Dever 157)

In other words, woman novelists utilized the Victorian novel's conventional marriage plot to covertly explore a woman's sexuality and her social position. For example, novels such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) examine "the issues central to mid-Victorian feminism, particularly its questioning of what any individual heroine's life can encompass and what her proper (feminine or moral) role is to be" (Schor 180). Additionally, George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* examines "the struggle of women for a fuller imaginative and moral life" as "its own Civil War" (Schor 182). As a further development to the novel's examination of gender roles, the New Woman novels represented a shift towards equal treatment for women. Influential "New Woman" novels include Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) and Mona Caird's *The Wing of Azrael* (1889), for example. These novels work to mirror Victorian social developments, and therefore address key concerns, such as independence and control over one's sexuality. Victorian society debated whether these

novels “reflected existing behaviors, or inspired otherwise docile young women to defy sexual norms” (Steinbach 178). These novels, in short, were an attack on an elite man’s sexuality (Griffin 108); while feminists behind this literary character fought against the “sexual devaluation of women,” men, by and large, saw the New Woman as a threat to their hegemonic power (Bell 81). By bringing the woman to the forefront of a novel, the New Woman challenged the binary “nature” of human sexuality (Ardis 55), which was the very foundation of the patriarchal structure of British society. Specifically, by disregarding the “inevitability” of the marriage plot, these novels replaced the Victorian angel with a character who resists culture’s hegemony and violates the social code (Ardis 12). Therefore, the literary New Woman character forces her reader to question two distinct social themes in Victorian Britain and its literature: first, the reliance on gender-specific roles to promote social stability; and second, the very stability of these gender roles themselves.

As this analysis indicates, the Victorian “woman” is not one monolithic gender identity. Instead, the idea of “woman” is the culmination of “a coherent pattern of thought that dominated the thinking of the educated classes as they considered gender relations in the middle of the nineteenth century” (Griffin 38). Novelists, including Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, examined the cracks in this “coherent pattern of thought.”

The “Angel in the House” & “New Woman” in the Sherlock Holmes Canon

A significant issue emerges when examining Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson’s interactions with women. When confronted with an “angel in the house” character, Holmes and Watson stringently adhere to the separation of public and private spheres, often excluding the woman from any information regarding the case at hand or pushing her out of any significant plot developments. Many women in the Sherlock Holmes canon represent this “angel in the

house”; here, to illustrate, I will examine two stories in particular: “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (December 1891) and “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (February 1892). In contrast, when confronted with a “New Woman” character, Holmes and Watson embrace this character’s ability to contribute to the case’s resolution. And, in the case of Irene Adler from “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Holmes also displays a reverent appreciation for the American actress’s talents. I argue that this almost paradoxical approach in how Holmes and Watson treat these two types of women characters articulates the gender tensions that plagued Victorian England.

Women are often in need of Holmes and Watson’s assistance and these situations draw a reader’s attention to the idea of separate spheres. For example, in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892) Helen Stoner turns up at 221B Baker Street with a domestic concern: she believes that her stepfather, Dr. Roylott, is involved in her twin sister’s mysterious death and Helen fears she is next. Helen tells Holmes that Julia died shortly after entering into an engagement with a half-pay major (Conan Doyle 241). This engagement appeared to upset Dr. Roylott. A fortnight before the wedding, Julia started hearing “a low, clear whistle” at nighttime; then, one night, Helen heard her sister screaming and, when Helen went to investigate, Julia collapsed into her arms saying, “Oh, my God! Helen! It was the band! The speckled band!” and died (Conan Doyle 242). Two years have passed and now Helen is engaged to be married; two days ago, she moved into her sister’s old room for repairs to her room of the house. She tells Holmes, “I suddenly heard in the silence of the night the low whistle which had been the herald of [Julia’s] death” (Conan Doyle 243). In the course of their investigation, Holmes and Watson discover that Dr. Roylott did in fact murder Julia and was plotting to kill Helen because he did not want to lose their money, which would be forfeited to their husbands upon their marriage.

A few key points emerge in this story. First: despite the fact that Dr. Roylott is only

Helen's stepfather and Helen has her own income from her mother's estate (a thousand pounds a year that Dr. Roylott controls while his stepdaughters live with him but that is forfeit once they marry [Conan Doyle 240]), she does not leave her stepfather. This inability to act independently, even after her twin sister's suspicious death, emphasizes woman's infantile-like status in Victorian society (Murdoch 81). Second: Helen stayed with her stepfather even though she has an aunt, a Miss Honoria Westphail, with whom she could potentially reside. Again, Helen appears paralyzed by her status as stepdaughter and she lacks the authority and conviction of the "New Woman" characters in the Sherlock Holmes canon. Instead of taking the initiative to leave her stepfather, Helen waits for Holmes and Watson to save her from certain death. Holmes and Watson's stakeout in Helen's bedroom reveals that Dr. Roylott had trained a swamp adder to enter the bedroom and strike at its inhabitant. In short, Helen needs Holmes's authority as a man to investigate and resolve a quite literal life-or-death situation, and one which her simple resolution to leave the situation could have, theoretically, solved.

Mrs. Neville St. Clair of "Twisted Lip" is another example of a woman whose passivity perfectly embodies the Victorian angel. The story begins with Mrs. Whitney, who barges into the Watson residence one night to beg Dr. Watson's help in finding her husband, who has disappeared into an opium den (Conan Doyle 212). In the opium den, Watson runs into Holmes, who is trying to find another lost husband, one Mr. Neville St. Clair. According to his wife, St. Clair works in London; Mrs. St. Clair followed her husband to London later one day to retrieve a parcel at a shipping office. On her way home, she tells Holmes, "she was walking...down Swandam Lane [and] suddenly heard an ejaculation or cry, and was struck cold to see her husband looking down at her [and] beckoning to her from a second-floor window" (Conan Doyle 216). As Holmes unravels the mystery, he discovers that Mr. St. Clair does not have a city job,

and instead makes his income by transforming into Hugh Boone, a professional beggar (Conan Doyle 224). Mrs. St. Clair has never suspected any ruse, and St. Clair says, “My dear wife knew that I had business in the City. She little knew what” (Conan Doyle 225). Mrs. St. Clair, then, is so far removed from the public sphere that she has absolutely no knowledge of her husband’s profession, and this complete ignorance emphasizes her role as a domestic entity. And, after a stern warning to Mr. St. Clair, Holmes and Watson agree not to tell Mrs. St. Clair of her husband’s begging, if he desists immediately (Conan Doyle 225). So, these men together conspire to keep a woman in ignorance of the public sphere and its workings, and with this ending Conan Doyle firmly reiterates and validates gendered binaries: Mrs. St. Clair returns to her domestic abode none the wiser, and Holmes corrects Mr. St. Clair’s behavior by forcing him to take on a respectable job, thereby reinstating Victorian social norms while simultaneously showing their fundamental weaknesses.

However, in instigating this conclusion, Sherlock Holmes has done Mrs. St. Clair a gross injustice. During the investigation, this wife presents herself as a meticulous and well-composed woman who is “not hysterical, nor given to fainting” and wants to ask Holmes “one or two plain questions” and hear “a plain answer” regarding her husband’s whereabouts (Conan Doyle 219). Her recollections of the day she saw her husband in the strange window, furthermore, are straight-forward and factual: she remembers that her husband was missing his collar and tie and that the note she received assuring her of St. Clair’s safety is in her husband’s handwriting (Conan Doyle 221, 220). This information helps Holmes unravel this mystery. The question remains, then, why Holmes, Watson, and St. Clair keep this self-composed wife in the dark. The answer, I would argue, is obvious: the gender binary dictates that this public concern is not relevant to the woman, and would disrupt her domestic bliss. Therefore, the only ones qualified

to address and correct Mr. St. Clair's deviant behavior *in the public sphere* are Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, agents working *in the public sphere*, too.

The Sherlock Holmes canon also includes New Woman characters who embody rebellious ideas of greater sexual and physical freedom and independence from the marriage plot. In the following section, I examine three of these characters: Irene Adler, Violet Hunter, and Violet Smith.³⁰ These women chart and explore social tensions between tradition and progress, with progress always winning out in these instances.

Irene Adler from "A Scandal in Bohemia" (July 1891) is perhaps the most iconic woman in the Sherlock Holmes canon, in part for her infamous parting phrase, "Goodnight, Mr. Holmes," and her moniker as "*the woman*," a phrase Holmes uses as a sign of respect.³¹ In short, Adler's significance as a New Woman character lies in her embodiment of this character's ability to threaten "to turn the world upside down" (Showalter 38) by exposing and upturning gender inequalities. Irene Adler threatens social order because she is a *protagonist* who is first a performer, second a former consort to royalty, and third a cross-dresser who outwits Britain's greatest detective. Holmes's notes on Irene Adler signify her colorful and social-bucking past: "Born in New Jersey in the year 1858. Contralto – hum! La Scala, hum! Prima donna Imperial Opera of Warsaw – yes!" (Conan Doyle 149). Given the middle class's obsession with domesticated women who do not work (Murdoch 81), Adler's successful forays on the public stage mark her as "othered." Additionally, the King of Bohemia's obsession with Adler indicates

³⁰ These three characters are not the only New Woman figures in Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes canon. However, they are the most significant ones from the Victorian era; the others, such as Anna Coram from "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez" (July 1904) come later; specifically, Kestner notes that the Georgian era saw the greatest up-tick in New Woman characters (166).

³¹ The phrase "*the woman*" (italics in original text) is specifically a form of respect in "Scandal." As Watson tells his audience in the beginning, "In [Holmes's] eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex" (Conan Doyle 145) and at the conclusion of the story, "And when he speaks of Irene Adler, or when he refers to her photograph, it is always under the honourable title of *the woman*" (Conan Doyle 159). This tone and word choice indicates that Irene Adler holds a significant place in Holmes's mind.

a romantic, if not sexual, history. The King tells Holmes and Watson, “I was mad – insane” when describing why he was photographed with the singer.³² Sherlock Holmes comments that His Majesty has “committed an indiscretion” and “compromised [him]self seriously” (Conan Doyle 149). These descriptions mark Irene Adler as a sharp contrast to previously discussed characters in the Sherlock Holmes canon, like Mrs. St. Clair.

Irene Adler’s transgressions against patriarchy’s hegemonic society are multi-faceted. First, Irene Adler is an *American* outwitting *British* agents. Her transgressions, therefore, hold the added layer of international rivalry and call into question Britain’s superiority as a nation if one of its most popular and most masculine agents cannot even conquer a foreign woman. Additionally, whether consciously or not, Conan Doyle’s decision to make Irene Adler an American engages with the New Woman’s status as a transatlantic phenomenon. As stated in my discussion of the New Woman in real life, authors such as Irish feminist Sarah Grand writing in an American magazine like the *North American Review* and a French-British writer like Ouida responding to those remarks in a British periodical mark the New Woman as an international figure. And Miss Adler beats the consulting detective by using one of Holmes’s strengths against him: disguise. Specifically, Irene Adler cross-dresses as a *man* to disguise her identity from Holmes. She tells the detective in her farewell note, “Male costume is nothing new to me. I often take advantage of the freedom which it gives” (Conan Doyle 158). Irene Adler therefore successfully eludes Holmes and Watson through the male identity that masculine attire provides her: because these two men rely on clothing to identify a man or woman, they automatically dismiss Adler as a man. As Rhonda Lynette Harris Taylor so succinctly states, Irene Adler’s

³² The photograph is the entire reason for Holmes and Watson’s intrusion into Irene Adler’s life. The King of Bohemia needs the photograph of the two of them returned to him, and Irene has thus far refused and the King’s agents have failed to successfully steal it.

power lies in “her willingness to transgress societal norms regarding sexuality” (including cross-dressing) (43). However, this use of male costume is a paradox: while Irene Adler in menswear is a literal embodiment of a rebellion against social clothing conventions, this cross-dressing also reinforces how men’s gender is symbolized in their clothing. Therefore, Irene Adler’s use of male clothing is both a rebellion against gender identity and an example as to the extent that gender regulated Victorian society.

Conan Doyle’s empathy for the New Woman is further evident in Irene Adler’s happy ending: Adler marries on her own terms, and leaves the country with her new husband, Godfrey Norton.³³ This successful conclusion stands in sharp contrast to the majority of New Woman novels, whose heroines usually end up dead or abandoned (Bell 92). However, Irene Adler’s greatest significance lies in the fact that her cumulative circumstances and actions “appeal to women struggling for their own emancipation” (Bell 87). Irene’s actions against the patriarchal figures of Holmes, Watson, and the King of Bohemia label her as an agent of change. Aside from Holmes’s notes concerning Irene’s impressive past, the King’s account of the attempts his men have made thus far to obtain the photograph indicate her cunning: “Five attempts have been made. Twice burglars in my pay ransacked her house. Once we diverted her luggage when she travelled. Twice she has been waylaid. There has been no result” (Conan Doyle 150). Adler’s resolve in this context takes on new significance, as the King’s statements emphasize that he believes he has the right and necessary authority to take Adler’s rightful property from her. And yet, those attempts, like Holmes’s own antics, are unsuccessful: the American New Woman succeeds in outwitting all three men.

³³ While lying outside of the focus of this dissertation, Carole Nelson Douglas’s *Good Night, Mr. Holmes* (1990) is the first in her *Irene Adler* series, and tells “A Scandal in Bohemia” from Irene’s point of view (and that of her intimate companion, Penelope); this first novel is significant because Nelson Douglas depicts an Irene Adler confident in herself and her abilities, unafraid to buck social norms in the true New Woman spirit.

With his second New Woman character, Conan Doyle directly engages his readers with one of Victorian society's most contentious figures: the governess.³⁴ "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches" first appeared in the *Strand's* June 1892 edition. Holmes and Watson take up the case of Miss Violet Hunter, a governess with apprehensions concerning her new employer. Miss Hunter comes to 221B Baker Street in search of advice: she's just taken a position at Copper Beeches for the family of Jephro Rucastle, and she feels uneasy. Her instincts are on point; Rucastle and his second wife hire Miss Hunter under the pretext of tutoring their young son, but the Rucastles have a more sinister motive. They are tricking Miss Alice Rucastle's (Jephro's daughter by his first wife) lover into thinking Miss Alice is well and alive, when she is in fact bedridden with "brain fever" (Conan Doyle 309).³⁵ However, the greater significance in this story is Holmes's admiration of Miss Violet Hunter's assertive and level-headed personality. This governess is an insightful woman, and Holmes is not shy in his admiration. Watson notices that his colleague is "favourably impressed by the manner and speech of his new client" after Miss Hunter's first visit to 221B Baker Street (Conan Doyle 296). Additionally, Miss Hunter is capable of handling herself under pressure. When she sends an urgent message to Holmes and Watson requesting their presence in a town near to Copper Beeches, she gives the detective and doctor detailed descriptions of her life and the inhabitants and, despite her admission that Jephro Rucastle has threatened her, she willingly returns to Copper Beeches and creates a distraction to allow Holmes and Watson to enter the household and conduct a covert investigation (Conan Doyle 306-307). However, her greatest triumph is not in winning Holmes's admiration but her

³⁴ Victorian literature often associated the governess with the prostitute or "fallen woman" because she was first paid to perform motherly duties that the mother herself did not handle (oftentimes to convey a sense of wealth) and second because she was often the daughter of a middle-class family who was forced to "sell" her body to achieve economic independence (see Kathryn Hughes's *The Victorian Governess* [Hambleton & London, 2003]).

³⁵ Jephro instructs Miss Hunter to cut her hair and sit in a specific spot by a window on a daily basis to fool Alice's lover into thinking Miss Hunter is the young lady and that she is alive and well.

successful deflection of the marriage plot: while Watson notes his extreme disappointment that Miss Hunter could not tempt his companion to marriage, Miss Hunter's career takes a turn for the better and she rises to headmistress at a private school in Walsall after the investigation at Copper Beeches (Conan Doyle 310). In short, a headstrong and capable governess frustrates Watson's patriarchal wishes.³⁶ Furthermore, I postulate that Violet Hunter is a more transgressive character than Irene Adler. Whereas Irene Adler's story ends with her rather conventional marriage to a British lawyer, Dr. Watson leaves his readers with the comment that Miss Hunter does not marry and instead leads an independent life with "considerable success" (Conan Doyle 310). Holmes's approval of Miss Hunter's intellect and Watson's frustration over the governess's business acumen after the Copper Beeches affair emphasize her success in transgressing traditional domestic values. As such, much like Irene Adler, Miss Hunter is an "exceptional woman" (Conan Doyle 307).

A final example of the New Woman in the Sherlock Holmes canon comes from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," published in the *Strand's* December 1903 issue. Watson begins this story by identifying the case as that of "Miss Violet Smith, the solitary cyclist of Charlington" (Conan Doyle 496). While Watson first describes Miss Smith as "tall, graceful, and queenly," this young woman also possesses a steely resolve and materializes at 221B Baker Street "with the determination to tell her story." Like Irene Adler and Violet Hunter, this cyclist maintains her independent spirit and a resolve under pressure. Miss Smith is identified as a New Woman because she is "an ardent bicyclist" who Holmes believes must be "full of energy" (Conan Doyle 496). As Emelyne Godfrey notes, by the 1890s "the safety bicycle had become *the*

³⁶ Of note, too, is Conan Doyle's creation of a governess character who leads a successful and respectable life. Miss Violet Hunter is never in danger of being associated with a more typical and stereotyped governess or causing a romance scandal, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

symbol of female emancipation, allowing a woman to direct her own course of travel unchaperoned” (26). Violet Smith exhibits this type of emancipation, and Watson observes that Miss Smith looks “graceful” on the bicycle (Conan Doyle 500); and, akin to Irene Adler and Violet Hunter, Violet Smith also displays fortitude when in danger. Miss Smith states her situation to Holmes and Watson with “great clearness and composure” and calmly describes both a mysterious man following her on her weekend bicycle ride to the train station and the trap she set for him (Conan Doyle 497-98). Miss Smith’s resourcefulness and independence in “Solitary Cyclist” create a non-conforming female character, one that stands in sharp contrast to other domestic goddesses such as Helen Stoner. Therefore, Conan Doyle’s inclusion of New Woman characters, *despite* his belief in a masculine brotherhood (which I discuss later in this chapter), exemplifies how masculine identity negotiated this idea of mobile, independent women: “The advent of the New Woman as a recognized category of nonconformist female, while new only as a rhetorical – and journalistic – figure, not as an entity, can be seen as a highly significant element in the general social and political restlessness of the time” (Bell 88). So, I argue that Conan Doyle’s positive portrayals function as tributes to the New Woman’s independent spirit.

Conan Doyle’s careful attention to the New Woman indicates her ability to “destabilize[e] male concepts of legal, sexual and marital affiliations” (Kestner 6). Sherlock Holmes is perfectly content to let these independent women control their story: Irene Adler bests the consulting detective, Violet Hunter is an active (and well-praised) agent in uncovering the Rucastle crimes, and Violet Smith is proactive in uncovering the truth concerning her stalker. These characters, therefore, reject the “angel in the house” trope and instead embrace the “New Woman” and her independent spirit. More significantly, however, Conan Doyle’s positive portrayal of New Women characters offers readers a conundrum in contrast to both his vision of

a masculine brotherhood and reliance on the “angel in the house” trope.

The Singularity of Kitty Winter

While Conan Doyle’s treatment of the New Woman indicates his awareness of shifting gender roles extending from the late Victorian through the Georgian eras, he also incorporates another female character that destabilizes masculine gender roles: Kitty Winter from “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client” (November 1924). While this story was published after the Victorian era, I bring up Kitty Winter here because she is both a martyred heroine and “fallen” woman whose contradictions underscore the nuances capable in female characters.

In this story, Sir James Damery tasks Holmes and Watson with releasing Miss Violet de Merville from the clutches of the Austrian murderer Baron Gruner. Miss de Merville is a rich and beautiful woman who is passionately in love with Gruner and “will not hear one word against him” despite pleas from concerned parties (Conan Doyle 945). Holmes and Watson must convince the lady to come to her senses and leave the Baron. However, their first attempt is useless, and they turn to Gruner’s former lover, Kitty Winter, for help in breaking up Miss de Merville and Gruner. Miss Winter’s story underscores women’s subjugation at the hands of men; she tells Holmes and Watson that Gruner “collects women, and takes a pride in his collection, as some men collect moths or butterflies” (Conan Doyle 949). Gruner then records these women in his “lust diary” (Conan Doyle 957). Women, therefore, are merely passive objects at Gruner’s disposal. Miss Winter’s impassioned speech to Miss de Merville brings this point of tension to its height:

I am his last mistress. I am one of a hundred that he has tempted and used and ruined and thrown into the refuse heap, as he will you also. *Your* refuse heap is more likely to be a grave, and maybe that’s the best. I tell you, you foolish woman, if you marry this man he’ll be the death of you. It may be a broken heart or it may be a broken neck, but he’ll have you one way or the other. (Conan Doyle 951)

As Kitty's comments indicate, this societal gender system turns women into objects at man's disposal. In such a society, Kitty Winter lives with a tarnished reputation, and does not wish the same fate on Miss de Merville.

Kitty Winter's actions, specifically her impassioned pleas to Gruner's current paramour and her vicious attack on the man himself, blur gender binaries in a way that underscores how a society that gives one gender authority over another destroys and corrupts both genders. Miss Winter's actions and what she represents to the woman's plight best describe an adaptation of the mid-century Victorian *femme fatale*. Much like the New Woman, this character "transgresses social boundaries and...rebels against conformist attitudes" (Hedgecock 1). The *femme fatale*, therefore, is another character breaking gender codes prescribed for the Victorian woman. Jennifer Hedgecock in *The Femme Fatale in Victorian Literature* (2008) defines this character, often called the "Fatal Woman," as one that "embodies the cruel conditions of modern life in which poverty, sickness, disease, slum dwelling, and prostitution echo the moral turpitude of the nineteenth century, and she mirrors social anxieties that conflict with prudish and often unrealistic ideological standards of modern Victorian life" (4).³⁷ Significantly, this woman blurs class boundaries because she "expos[es] sexual exploitation in marriage and gender inequality" (Hedgecock 18).³⁸ Conan Doyle's Kitty Winter performs such a role, as exemplified in her speech to Violet de Merville. Kitty Winter is not a passive character; instead, she breaks gender codes by "acting" masculine, but with an entirely different purpose than Irene Adler.

When Holmes and Watson first meet Miss Winter, she is not hesitant in displaying her

³⁷ Examples of the Fatal Woman include Becky Sharp from Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, Lady Audley from Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*, and Lydia Gwilt from Wilkie Collins's *Armadale*.

³⁸ While not directly relevant here, I will note that the *femme fatale* is particularly significant for the detective genre. As Hedgecock argues, the woman's intrusion on a higher class often triggers an investigation, throwing the "spoiled and youthful" male character into the role of detective; therefore, the *femme fatale* represents disorder and ambiguity, while the detective represents order and stability (Hedgecock 10).

murderous feelings towards the Baron: “If I could pull him down! [...] Oh, if I could only pull him into the pit where he has pushed so many!” (Conan Doyle 948). This display of emotion does not align with the temperament of the domestic angel, whose job was to “create a moral foundation for society” (Murdoch 81); as a testament to both her passion and conviction, Kitty is true to her words to Holmes and Watson. While Holmes attempts to steal Gruner’s infamous diary, Kitty Winter throws vitriol in Gruner’s face, which Holmes recounts for Watson:

The vitriol was eating into [Gruner’s face] everywhere and dripping from the ears and the chin. One eye was already white and glazed. The other was red and inflamed. The features which I had admired a few minutes before were now like some beautiful painting over which the artist has passed a wet and foul sponge. They were blurred, discoloured, inhuman, terrible. (Conan Doyle 956)

Kitty Winter has engaged in violent destruction against man – and she did so with a certain measure of success: Miss Winter’s act ensures that Baron Gruner will live with horrifying disfigurement, a condition that breaks his spell over Violet de Merville, and perhaps future young women who may have fallen into his trap. This satisfying ending sees Violet de Merville freed, Kitty Winter avenged, and English women safe from a murderous and abusive foreigner.

One significant point remains concerning Baron Gruner: he is Austrian, not British. This shift in nationality only serves to further underscore gender imbalances: the woman, who should be the moral support of the British man, suffers abuse under an outside force, thereby exposing Britain to foreign influence. Such exposure is in keeping with the then-current British concerns over international influences, such as an increased use of espionage and growing power in Germany (Kestner 176). By exposing the woman’s helplessness in the face of an opposing nationality, Conan Doyle draws attention to the interconnections between the female, the male, and British national security. In other words, if the wife is the backbone of British morality, then her abuse at the hands of a foreign national puts the British Empire at risk.

As these examinations of fictional women indicate, Victorian society codified and privileged “sexuality as the core of a private identity” (Walkowitz 8-9). To combat the gender binaries that separated “male” from “female,” women, both in real life and in literature, worked to blur those gender binaries and either take on masculine traits or attack the masculine figure to examine gender inequalities.³⁹

Victorian Masculinity: The Hopelessness of “Manliness”

While Sherlock Holmes and his steadfast companion take a serious and socially-conscious approach to their treatment of women, the two men at 221B Baker Street are more ambiguous in their attention to masculinity. As with pushback against the “angel in the house” in Victorian literature, this ambiguity reflects growing restlessness in gender roles. Victorian social and cultural conventions concerning gender and sexuality are best described as a confrontation between tradition and progress. While gender roles for men were often just as restrictive as roles for women, real-life masculinity was an elusive concept. In sum, “masculine identity was inseparable from the totality of gender and social relations, and where these were contradictory and changeable, so too was the idea of what constituted the manly” (Mallett 153-54). The ideal

³⁹ Parallels also exist between Conan Doyle’s women characters and his relationships with his two wives. Specifically, the shifts in personality between his first and second wives underscore Conan Doyle’s conflicting relationship with women. Conan Doyle was first married to Louise Hawkins. This relationship was one of passivity; Louise “fitted seamlessly into [Conan Doyle’s] now well-ordered existence. No evidence seems to exist of Louise trying to alter Arthur’s carefully assembled décor or impose her personality on [his] house.” Louise’s personality evokes similarities with Mary Morstan, for example, whose only purpose seems to be keeping house for Watson and serving as the occasional domestic prop to assure readers that he is a heterosexual man. Conan Doyle and Louise married in 1895 and she succumbed to tuberculosis in 1906 (Lycett 113, 311). By the time of Louise’s death, Conan Doyle had been engaged in an affair with Jean Leckie, who became his second wife in 1907 (Lycett 327). Jean was a woman who exuded a New Woman’s independence but did not engage in open rebellion: “Her fledgling career [as a singer] gave her an air of independence. Yet she was neither a suffragette nor a non-reproducing blue stocking of the type abhorred by Grant Allen” (Lycett 247). Perhaps equally as significant, Jean is the reason for Holmes’s reappearance in “The Adventure of the Empty House” (September 1903) (Ashley 136). “Empty House” is the first in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* and Sherlock Holmes fans have Jean to thank for his resurrection. Jean’s activity sharply contrasts with Louise’s passivity, and this dramatic shift between the two women mirrors Conan Doyle’s own inconsistencies in engaging with the “woman” question in the Sherlock Holmes canon.

personification of masculinity originated with the middle-class Victorian man, who was supposed to embody a commitment to work, family, and Britain. However, such ideas were difficult to maintain amid change.

According to Victorian social conventions, the middle-class man should aim for “self-control, self-discipline, and the absence of emotional expression” (Walkowitz 17); so, the perfect Victorian gentleman “represented a male of enormous self-discipline who could harness his emotions and commit himself to a life of work and industry and of duty to family and country” (Dell and Losey 11). At its core, this masculinity sought to curb social and psychological crises during a time of increasing exploration, imperial conquest, and social unrest. Conan Doyle adhered to this idea of virile and self-disciplined masculinity, and his Sherlock Holmes stories (and much of Conan Doyle’s oeuvre) display a commitment to “moderniz[e] and strength[en] the representation of British manhood to match the directives of more secular, scientific and empire-conscious culture” (Barsham 1). This commitment on the part of Conan Doyle comes from his time as a student under Dr. Joseph Bell, a Scottish surgeon who built an impressive reputation as a professor and medical expert. In fact, Conan Doyle saw Bell’s empirical mind as a necessity for any consulting detective: when writing the Sherlock Holmes stories, Conan Doyle “cast his mind back to Bell and his technique of picking up clues from the minutiae of a person’s appearance,” and this discernment separates Conan Doyle’s consulting detective from previous prototypes, such as Edgar Allan Poe’s Auguste Dupin (Lycett 118). Holmes is “a man of reason” who exemplifies “masculine gender modelling” through his “rationality and scientism” (Kestner 206). Sherlock Holmes, in other words, served as a paradigm for Victorian masculinity.

And yet, as previously stated, masculinity in Victorian Britain was not some monolithic identity; Victorian society also witnessed a thriving, though often pointedly ignored, homosexual

community. British attention to and prosecution of homosexuality was paradoxical: while Britain was the only country in Western Europe to utilize draconian punishments⁴⁰ for those found guilty of homosexual acts, “homosexuality norms were rarely and reluctantly enforced” during this time (Adut 214). This under-enforcement, quite simply, arose from the upper class’s abhorrence of scandal; a significant number of upper-class and well-connected Victorians engaged in homosexual activities, and even well-known public transgressions went under-enforced simply because the publicity alone “would significantly contaminate and provoke a wide array of third parties” (Adut 222). In other words, prosecuting acts of homosexuality would do more harm than good because such actions would simply bring more attention and scandal, both of which were abhorrent to Victorian society’s need for reticence. Reticence was “the prime requisite of respectability” and therefore “the paramount principle of the 19th-century public sphere” (Adut 222). However, prominent theorists and social thinkers analyzed and discussed homosexuality. John Addington Symonds,⁴¹ a classically trained scholar, wrote frequently and passionately about same-sex desire and advocated for sexual reform. Symonds’s works are significant to my conversation here because his attempts to challenge homosexuality’s reputation as a purely sexual act and instead promote its emotional import gives the homosocial bond between Holmes and Watson new significance.

Symonds’s attention to homosexual desire arose out of his experiences at Harrow School; “he was disturbed by the boys’ sexual rough-housing” and “headmaster Charles Vaughan’s affair with one of the boys.” These experiences “appalled Symonds because of Vaughan’s hypocrisy

⁴⁰ Lesbianism itself is exempt here, and never criminalized; as Adut points out, lesbianism was a taboo subject “lest young women, who were seen as more susceptible than men, be unintentionally recruited to the sexual practice” (223). Moreover, as Sharon Marcus argues in *Between Women* (2007), there was a “particular indifference of Victorians to a homo/hetero divide for women” (13).

⁴¹ Born 1840; died 1893

and because it threatened the idealization of homosexual love that Symonds was formulating” (Norton). This concern stayed with Symonds during his college career at Oxford, where he “worried about the ‘goodness’ of homoerotic desire in Hebraic as well as Hellenic terms, [and] engaged with a religiously-minded strand of mid-Victorian thought about how to manage desires that threatened to make one lose control” (Rutherford 608). Symonds began a methodical and empirical search to uncover and examine the roots of homosexuality; for example, in *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1873), Symonds “documents how love between men was practiced in ancient Greece, attempts to determine ethical principles governing same-sex sexual behavior, and shows that such principles varied across times and cultures” (Rutherford 612). Additionally, Symonds co-wrote *Sexual Inversion*⁴² with Havelock Ellis,⁴³ a radical writer and doctor. The two utilized a total of 36 case studies of famous men whose sexual proclivities labeled them as “inverts.” Symonds’s contribution to Victorian understandings of sexuality involve his advocacy for homosexual acceptance, which was based on his belief that “homosexuality was a natural ‘minority’ rather than an ‘abnormality’” (Norton).⁴⁴

Symonds’ work remains influential. As Rutherford notes, “thanks to Symonds, the first edition [of *Sexual Inversion*] bridges the divide between scientific and humanistic ways of understanding sexuality” (618). Such a compilation of data, along with Symonds’s examination of homoeroticism in the Renaissance and his methodical investigation of classical writings on homosexuality, complicates heterosexual masculinity as exemplified in Dr. Bell simply because

⁴² *Sexual Inversion* was not published until after Symonds’ death.

⁴³ Havelock Ellis (1859-1939) was a writer and sexologist. While he and Symonds never met in person, Ellis “was strongly committed to [*Sexual Inversion*], partly as a result of his awareness of the homosexuality of his wife and friends.” However, Ellis also supported eugenics (“the planned breeding of the best”) and “female passivity in sexual matters,” two significant stances that complicate his legacy as a proponent for viewing as “a common and recurrent part of human sexuality” (Weeks).

⁴⁴ However, Symonds’s works towards normalizing homosexuality left women behind. His devaluation of women is neither worse nor better than his fellow men; instead, Symonds understood and accepted the separate spheres as a natural state of affairs (Sedgwick 211).

Symonds's findings question heterosexuality's emphasis on an empirical and manly "masculinity" and expose heterosexuality's tenuous hold on the Victorian public.

Symonds's conclusions concerning Victorian culture's attention to masculine love are not flattering; he "argues that his own culture, by denying same-sex love public recognition, reduced homoeroticism to merely sexual contact." Symonds saw that homosexuality was crude and physical rather than "a form of love" in the eyes of mainstream Victorian society (Rutherford 623). This conclusion regarding same-sex love stands in sharp contrast to Symonds's understanding of Greek homosexuality. According to Symonds's writings, "the Greeks alone in Western history distinguished between 'vulgar' and 'heroic' forms of 'masculine passion'" (Rutherford 613). In all, Symonds wanted his oeuvre to "demystify inversions and reframe the public discourse around pathology instead of criminality" (Rutherford 615). For Symonds, homosexuality is not a criminal act, but a spiritual connection. Regrettably, however, instead of fostering understanding through his work, Symonds's attempts to open Victorian culture to accepting homosexuality may have influenced Oscar Wilde's infamous trial and conviction: "Wilde and his entourage may have felt that they could flaunt their [homo]sexuality because they mistakenly believed the Hellenic ideal was being accepted in late-Victorian culture" (Losey 257).⁴⁵ While Wilde and his companions were much mistaken, Symonds's work does represent a distinct and vibrant alternative interpretation of "masculinity" different from that endorsed by middle-class Victorians.

Not unexpectedly, Symonds's views and arguments were in the minority and the English press suppressed his work several times (Norton). Oscar Wilde's trial exemplifies a more

⁴⁵ Oscar Wilde himself used the plea of "Greek love" in his defense during his second trial. See, for example, Bénédicte Coste's "Autonomy in the Dock: Oscar Wilde's First Trial" (*Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens*, vol. 79, Spring 2014, pp. 2-11).

“typical” Victorian reaction to homosexuality because it underscores the difference between *talking about* homosexuality and *engaging in* homosexuality: “The publicity of homosexuality, and not homosexuality itself, was...the primary preoccupation of the authorities” (Adut 224). Wilde’s sexual exploits, in short, could not be pushed under the proverbial rug. On 6 April 1895, the court charged Oscar Wilde with crimes under the Criminal Law Amendment Act and further found him guilty on 25 May 1895 of “gross indecency” with male prostitutes (Edwards). While researchers and scholars continue to argue over the contradictory and flimsy nature of eye-witness testimony, the court nevertheless sentenced Wilde to hard labor. Wilde’s trial caused setbacks in accepting homosexuality, and, despite the work of theorists like Symonds, homosexuality would lurk in the shadows as a criminal act until the late twentieth century. And yet, Symonds’s work remains a significant factor in understanding relationships between men. Specific to this chapter, Symonds’s work underscores Victorian society’s need to smother homosexuality in innuendos or dilute it into a homosocial relationship, such as that of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson.

As previously stated, the model gentleman in Victorian society was the middle-class man (*Between Men* 176), and for this man homosexual desire was infantile: something one witnessed or participated in at public school, but something to also grow out of (not something worth discussing and analyzing, as was Symonds’s reaction). As Sedgwick states,

In short, a gentleman will associate the erotic end of the homosocial spectrum, not with dissipation,⁴⁶ not with viciousness or violence,⁴⁷ but with childishness, as an infantile need, a mark of powerlessness, which, while it might be viewed with shame or scorn or denial, is unlikely to provoke the virulent, accusatory projection that characterizes twentieth-century homophobia. (*Between Men* 177)

Therefore, Victorian society used homophobia “as a tool of control over the entire spectrum of

⁴⁶ Dissipation was considered a homosocial failing on the part of the upper-class (Sedgwick 176).

⁴⁷ Viciousness or violence was considered a homosocial failing on the part of the lower-class (Sedgwick 174).

male homosocial organization” (*Between Men* 115); men could form bonds with one another, but such bonds should never cross into sexual contact. This tool was one of several paradigms established to reinforce manliness in Victorian culture. As Elaine Showalter notes, these paradigms for masculinity attempted to stop a gender crisis and “often concealed deeper uncertainties and contradictions” inherent in both understandings of femininity and masculinity (qtd. in Kestner 5). While the Sherlock Holmes canon engages in the serious question of what “to do” with women, Conan Doyle’s approach to masculinity is more playful in the relationship with Holmes and Watson. While the Sherlock Holmes canon works to associate Holmes “with qualities gendered masculine in Victorian culture: science, reason, system and principle” (Kestner 28),⁴⁸ Holmes and Watson’s homosocial relationship allows readers to play with the idea of a homosexual relationship between the two men. This playfulness, furthermore, underscores the idea of a masculine brotherhood that separated one gender from another in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Two Men at 221B Baker Street

In his introduction to *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: A Textbook of Friendship* (1944), Christopher Morley describes Holmes and Watson’s first breakfast together at 221B

⁴⁸ One interesting contradiction in Conan Doyle’s views on masculinity was his fervent belief in spiritualism, especially after World War I. While spiritualism’s rise to prominence after the horrors of World War I is well-documented, it is nevertheless difficult to reconcile the Conan Doyle who wrote the Sherlock Holmes stories with the Conan Doyle who staunchly believed in the Cottingley Fairies, even after those images had been debunked (Ashley 210). However, an explanation can be found in Conan Doyle’s heritage: his spiritualism began as a quest “for common ground between his well honed Edinburgh rationalism and his innate sense of some greater power in the universe” (Lycett 135). Therefore, as Mike Ashely stipulates, “Doyle’s conversion to spiritualism was clearly not an overnight decision. It was something he had investigated for thirty years before declaring his beliefs in ‘A New Revelation’ [published] in *Light* on 4 November 1916,” which soon turned into public speaking and full-length books on the subject (Ashely 201). These contradictions in Conan Doyle’s own masculinity only serve to further highlight the difficulties in adhering to strict gender binaries that assigned specific roles and characteristics that separate men and women.

Baker Street as “one of the most perfect moments that fiction can contrive” (1). While such a statement is surely excessive and a little grandiose, Morley’s claim nevertheless highlights the significance of Holmes and Watson’s relationship as an intimate, homosocial unit. According to Eve Sedgwick’s quintessential *Between Men*, “homosocial” is an oxymoron: “it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex...obviously formed by analogy with ‘homosexual,’ and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual’” (1). Sedgwick specifically utilizes the term “homosocial desire” when examining this bond to create an “erotic emphasis” because the term “love” could too easily link to a specific emotion, whereas “desire” denotes an “affective social force” (2). Sedgwick’s overall argument is that sexuality lies on a continuum: at one end, homosexuality, and at the other, heterosexuality. Therefore, “homosexual” and “heterosexual” never fully separate and exist rather in degrees in relation to one another. This continuum, furthermore, means that heterosexuality (and homosexuality) are nuanced concepts, rather than stringent rules. This “spectrum” solidifies male-male bonds that are cemented when and how the men decide to appropriate a woman (*Between Men* 90). In Victorian culture, homosocial desire relies on separate spheres because that gender dichotomy promotes male-male bonds over male-female (and specifically, husband-wife) bonds. For the Victorian middle class, the homosocial bond “function[ed] on a wage system for males and a system of domestic servitude for females” (*Between Men* 124). Men, in other words, form homosocial bonds “of honor” over “the dead, discredited, or disempowered body of a woman” (*Between Men* 137). In this case, the woman’s body is a necessary object utilized to maintain a veneer of heterosexuality.⁴⁹ Therefore, homosocial desire routes “through heterosexual love more or less as

⁴⁹ Sedgwick does briefly mention the female homosocial bond; she argues that the Victorian gender system did not allow for solidarity between women and therefore the female homosocial bond is not possible (151). However, Sharon Marcus refutes such a claim in *Between Women* (2007).

a matter of course” (*Between Men* 160).

The relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson embodies this masculine homosocial affection, which occasionally becomes an intimate and almost homoerotic affair. Throughout the various adventures of Holmes and Watson, the two men exhibit a significant amount of intimacy with each other, and this intimacy oftentimes evokes a husband-wife bond.⁵⁰ For example, in “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (December 1891), Holmes comes to Watson’s residence (the good doctor is now married and working again as a physician) and implores his friend to leave Mrs. Watson for an adventure; as a note of reassurance, Holmes tells his “dear Watson,” “My room at The Cedars is a double-bedded one” (Conan Doyle 214), implying that Watson does not need to acquire his own room because they are comfortable sharing one. While this assurance is not the same as *sharing* a bed, the fact that Holmes mentions a bed at all creates an association between Holmes and Watson and intimate sleeping arrangements.⁵¹ These two men have created a “male fantasy of domesticity without the intrusion of female presence” (Kestner 49): Holmes and Watson possess the ideal intimate domestic partnership without a wife. This comfortable domesticity without a wife glorifies the idea of a masculine brotherhood, an idea steeped in Western traditions and history.

These instances of masculine affection and homosocial desire resonate fittingly with two philosophers’ work on relationships between men: Cicero’s concept of *amicitia* and Michel de Montaigne’s essay “Of friendship.” In *de Amicitia* (44 CE), Cicero describes *amicitia* as a love that springs up among men in recognition of *virtus*, which literally means ‘masculinity’ (Fogel 86). In Cicero’s writing, the love between two men who exhibit *amicitia* is greater and purer than

⁵⁰ And, therefore, this bond can be read as sexual, rather than social.

⁵¹ This point of twin beds bespeaks of sleeping arrangements as intimate, and on occasion *more* intimate, than husband and wife. In the middle-class Victorian household, many married couples had separate bedrooms, and those that did not often had a separate dressing room for the husband (Flanders 38).

that of blood relations, and infinitely superior to the love between a man and his wife (Fogel 82). Michel de Montaigne picks up this discussion on male friendship in “Of friendship,” an essay in his *Essais* (1580).⁵² De Montaigne believes that a “perfect friendship” is a rare gift, one that is more significant than that of child and parent, or of husband and wife. Specifically, he describes friendship as “a general and universal fire, temperate and equal, a constant establishment of heat, all gentle and smooth, without poignancy or roughness.” While Watson may bridle at Holmes’s criticisms concerning his stories, their compassion towards one another mimics both Cicero and de Montaigne’s praise of male friendship. For example, in “The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier” (October 1926), Holmes tells his reader, “Speaking of my old friend and biographer...if I burden myself with a companion in my various little inquiries it is not done out of sentiment or caprice, but it is that Watson has some remarkable characteristics...which in his modesty he has given small attention amid his exaggerated estimates of my own performances” (Conan Doyle 958). Holmes also comments to his companion in “His Last Bow” (September 1917), “Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age” after the “two friends chatted in intimate converse for a few minutes, recalling once again the days of the past” (Conan Doyle 939). These comments emphasize Holmes’s admiration for his companion and the endurance of their relationship. Additionally, Watson’s final comment regarding Holmes’s ostensible death at the end of “The Adventure of the Final Problem” (December 1893) embodies his masculine love for the detective: “him whom I shall ever regard as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known” (Conan Doyle 449). This companionship, therefore, is a “rare gift” that outlasts Watson’s marriage, Holmes’s death, and the twentieth century.

⁵² *Essais* was originally published in French. I am using the Charles Cotton translation from 1887, available from Project Gutenberg.

Women, however, experienced no such praise in these philosophers' writing. In Cicero's discussion of *amicitia*, "the absence of women means that the public sphere rather than the private is the focus: the sphere of explicit political action and actors, rather than the sphere of families and their relations with one another and within themselves" (Fogel 82). De Montaigne, much like Cicero in *de Amicitia* (a work the French philosopher does reference in this essay), contrasts male friendship with a woman's presence: "Moreover, to say the truth, the ordinary talent of women is not such as is sufficient to maintain the conference and communication required to the support of [male friendship]." For de Montaigne, marriage itself is "a covenant, the entrance into which only is free, but the continuance in it forced and compulsory." While Watson's marriage to Mary seems to be happy,⁵³ Holmes and Watson's relationship is often in contrast to their clients' marital woes. For example, in "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (1892), Holmes notes that a certain Mr. Henry Baker's wife has stopped caring for him, as Baker's hat has not been brushed recently (Conan Doyle 228). By contrast, Holmes and Watson follow this case to the Alpha Inn for supper. Watson describes their walk to the inn in picturesque language: "It was a bitter night, so we drew on our ulsters and wrapped cravats about our throats. Outside, the stars were shining coldly in a cloudless sky...Our footfalls rang out crisply and loudly...Holmes pushed open the door of the private bar and ordered a glass of beer" (Conan Doyle 232). Whereas Henry Baker and his wife might be at odds, Holmes and Watson are in perfect step. Additionally, despite Mary Watson's significant role in *The Sign of the Four*,⁵⁴ she quickly loses her sense of independence after marriage. In "The Man with the

⁵³ Watson never mentions any conflicts with Mary. Furthermore, she seems supportive of his adventures with Holmes, saying, for example, "You have been looking a little pale lately. I think the change would do you good, and you are always so interested in Mr. Sherlock Holmes's cases" in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" (1891) when Holmes sends a telegram to Watson requesting the doctor's presence on a case.

⁵⁴ I will explore this significance in Chapter 4.

Twisted Lip” (1891), Mrs. Watson demurely performs some “needle-work” (Conan Doyle 212) and quickly fades to the background while Watson and Holmes set out to solve the mystery of Isa Whitney’s disappearance. The homosocial bond present in the Sherlock Holmes canon, therefore, connects to a historical privileging of men’s bonds, specifically at the exclusion of a woman’s presence.

To add another facet to this point, Holmes and Watson also operate their consulting detective business in a domestic space: the parlor. One method of compartmentalizing genders in the middle-class Victorian home was through physical boundaries: “The expansion and creation of separate domestic spaces – nurseries, servant quarters, and bathrooms – underscored the use of architecture to demark Victorian ideals of class distinction and separate spheres”; in this context, rooms such as the drawing room and less-formal morning rooms (including parlors) were places for women to “receiv[e] visitors, writ[e] letters” and engage in other domestic pursuits” (Murdoch 93, 94-95). Herein lies the Holmes-Watson consulting conundrum: they are *men* pursuing a *business* in a typically *woman-oriented* domestic space. When examining this conundrum with Kolodny’s playful pluralism in mind, readers can interpret the Holmes and Watson rapport as a homosocial relationship that often leans a little further towards homosexuality on the homosexual-heterosexual continuum.

The language the two men use to address one another throughout the stories further defines this relationship as intimate; Holmes often refers to his companion as “my dear Watson” and vice versa. Specifically, a key word search for Holmes’s phrase “my dear Watson” for the entire Sherlock Holmes canon yields exactly 92 matches; this number is quite high for a consulting detective whose entire mystique is built around his unemotional and analytical brain. Oftentimes this phrase appears more than once in a single exchange. For example, in *The Hound*

of the Baskervilles (August 1901-April 1902), Holmes uses this phrase twice in one short exchange:

Holmes: I am afraid, *my dear Watson*, that most of your conclusions were erroneous. When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are entirely wrong in this instance. The man is certainly a country practitioner. And he walks a good deal.

Watson: Then I was right.

Holmes: To that extent.

Watson: But that was all.

Holmes: No, no, *my dear Watson*, not all – by no means all... (Doyle 636) (my emphasis)

Of course, “my dear Watson” could be considered condescension on Holmes’s part, but that explanation alone does not exhaust other connotations, such as Holmes’s use of “stimulated” in this same exchange, for example. Holmes is also not one to use passive-aggressive, pandering language, again as this exchange indicates: the detective is more than happy to point out Watson’s inevitable failures at deduction.

Watson reciprocates this intimate language. For example, Watson comments in “The Adventure of the Yellow Face” (February 1893) that he and Holmes passed two hours together “in silence for the most part, as befits two men who know each other intimately” (Conan Doyle 327). The use of “intimately” here belies a deeply personal relationship that is perhaps more than a simple friendship. Moreover, in “The Adventure of the Engineer’s Thumb” (March 1892), Watson begins his narration with a note that he has left Baker Street: “I had returned to civil practice and had finally abandoned Holmes” (Conan Doyle 254). The use of “abandoned” here is quite dramatic, and implies an emotional strain on Watson’s part. Watson’s descriptions of Holmes’s methods and intelligence complement this emotive language. This language is, to use an anachronism, fanboyish. For example, at the end of “The Adventure of the Reigate Squires” (June 1893), Watson utters this statement (variations of which can be found in nearly every

single one of Holmes's cases): "'Speaking professionally, it was admirably done,' cried I, looking in amazement at this man who was forever confounding me with some new phase of his astuteness" (Conan Doyle 383). Such fanboyish praise easily blurs Victorian boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality. I argue, therefore, that readers can interpret these hints of intimacy as an exploration of frustrated sexual tensions inherent in male relationships: unable to broach the subject of homosexuality, the Holmes-Watson relationship must rely on an intimate, homosocial bond that represents a blurring inside the hegemony.⁵⁵

Holmes and Watson: Surveillance, Deviance, and Assimilation

Sherlock Holmes and John Watson's heteronormative homosocial relationship is complemented by their role as enforcers in a surveillance state. In "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (January 1892), our consulting detective says, "My name is Sherlock Holmes. It is my business to know what other people don't know" (Conan Doyle 235). This statement underscores Holmes's role as an agent of the panopticon, a concept from French philosopher Michel Foucault. According to Foucault, the panopticon introduces a "disciplinary mechanism" where "each individual is constantly located, examined" and codified, thereby creating order and homogeneity in that specific society (2). This mechanism is a state of consciousness that surveilles a group of people, instilling binaries that rely on gender, sex, race, and class to assert control:

General[ly] speaking all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal); and that of coercive assignment, of differential distribution (who is he; where his must be; how he is to be characterized; how he is to be recognized; how a

⁵⁵ Alternatively, readers could examine the subtext Holmes and Watson's language and utilize a psychological or psychoanalytic framework. Such a framework could lead to an argument that Holmes and Watson *are* homosexual; while such an interpretation holds merit, I would counter that Conan Doyle's interest in creating a masculine brotherhood is more indicative of patriarchal interests, rather than subliminal homosexuality.

constant surveillance is to be exercised over him in an individual way, etc.). (Foucault 4)

This surveillance creates docile bodies simply because the panopticon stops deviance: someone is always performing surveillance, and this surveillance identifies deviance and corrects it. Specific to this conversation, Foucault's panopticon closely mirrors the detective's methods. To succeed as a self-proclaimed private detective, Sherlock Holmes must necessarily function as a panopticon himself through observation, deduction, and action. His famed powers of ratiocination come from his adept observation and surveillance.⁵⁶ Specifically, Holmes and Watson work to reintegrate "othered" characters back into Victorian society, most especially in terms of gender (and race) through *binaries*: British/foreign; natural/other; male/female, for example (and closely mirroring Foucault's own words). Once this process is complete, Victorian society naturally returns to its veneer of respectability.

Two specific characterizations of the panopticon create a connection between Foucault and Conan Doyle. First, its intention is "to spread throughout the social body...to become a generalized function" (Foucault 11). And second, "anyone may come and exercise in the central tower the functions of surveillance (Foucault 10). So, this surveillance first creates generalized and accepted cultural and social patterns and then allows *anyone* (read: a private detective) to uphold those patterns. In this context, the panopticon is a metaphorical prison that issues specific social and cultural boundaries and rules (such as public/private spheres) that permeate every level of Victorian society. This panopticon gives Sherlock Holmes the authority to right all social wrongs, such as those pertaining to gender and race, that he uncovers during his many cases.

Gender in the Panopticon

⁵⁶ For example, in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" (February 1892), Holmes deduces that Helen Stoner has traveled a great distance because she travelled in a dog cart to get to the train station; he makes this deduction from the mud splattered on her jacket "in no less than seven places" and notes that "The marks are perfectly fresh. There is no vehicle save a dog-cart which throws up mud in that way" (Conan Doyle 239).

Sherlock Holmes's association with the panopticon is most obvious in his ability to reinstate gender norms. The detective character and its genre act as regulatory agents that combat the social, cultural, and political complications present in Victorian society; in other words, the detective polices gender according to social constructs. For example, Holmes's cases often rely on the detective's ability to restore men and women to their proper roles in society. "A Case of Identity" (September 1891) is one such case. In this work, a greedy stepfather disrupts the "natural" final step of a woman: marriage and family. Miss Mary Sutherland visits Holmes and Watson with an affair of the heart. She is looking for her lover, Mr. Hosmer Angel. The two met at a "gasfitters' ball" and they were engaged soon after their first few meetings (Conan Doyle 177). Unfortunately for his fiancé, Mr. Angel disappeared right before the wedding. Holmes makes short work of Miss Sutherland's case: following the clues, the consulting detective identifies Miss Sutherland's stepfather, Mr. Windibank, as the vanished Mr. Angel. Mr. Windibank disguised himself as Mr. Angel to fool Miss Sutherland into marrying her own stepfather, thereby keeping her inheritance in the family.

In trying to marry his own stepdaughter, Mr. Windibank essentially tries to foil or outwit the Victorian middle class's social agenda for all marriageable young women (marriage, children, domestic bliss). Holmes finds clues to Mr. Windibank's deception in Mr. Angel's incongruencies concerning his characteristics and mannerisms. Sherlock Holmes's first clues come in the form of Mr. Angel's description: "He was a very shy man, Mr. Holmes... Very retiring... Even his voice was gentle. He'd had the quinsy and swollen glands when he was young [and] it had left him with a weak throat, and a hesitating, whispering fashion of speech" (Conan Doyle 177). While a characterization of "retiring" might predispose the reader to think Mr. Angel a private and perhaps respectable man, the rest of this description is more closely aligned

with “feminine” traits that invoke ideas of passivity and dependency.⁵⁷ Take Dr. Watson as a contrast: he is a man of action, war, and medicine.⁵⁸ Therefore, Mr. Windibank’s failure at disguise means that he blurs gender binaries, providing Holmes with the necessary clues to solve Miss Sutherland’s case.

In short, Mr. Windibank’s actions place Holmes in the role of enforcer: after uncovering this deception, it is up to Holmes to first punish Mr. Windibank and then re-introduce Miss Sutherland into society as an unattached young woman ready for marriage. In fact, Holmes almost resorts to violence, telling Mr. Windibank, “If the young lady has a brother or a friend, he ought to lay a whip across your shoulders...here’s a hunting-crop handy”; but Mr. Windibank runs out and escapes Holmes (Conan Doyle 183). And yet, this story contains a troubling contradiction: while Holmes does successfully solve this case, he is *not* an official agent of the state, and therefore lacks the legal authority to bring Mr. Windibank to any sort of punishment. Holmes further exacerbates this loophole when he decides not to tell Miss Sutherland of her stepfather’s deception, thereby giving Mr. Windibank the latitude to commit a similar crime in the future. Specifically, this collusion between Holmes and Windibank to keep Miss Sutherland in the dark exemplifies Victorian society’s belittlement of women’s intellect and its reliance on men’s authority to right errors, which parallels Holmes and Watson’s decision to exclude Mrs. St. Clair from their investigation into her husband. Overall, “A Case of Identity” underscores the tensions present in Victorian gender binaries, and raises questions concerning conformity *with* and rebellion *against* gender norms for men and women.

⁵⁷ As Murdoch states, “Middle-class Victorians both praised married women’s power within the home to create a moral foundation for society and, at the same, paradoxically described married women’s relation to their husbands as one of dependency, like a child to a father.” (81) Hosmer Angel’s hesitating and whispering speech and shy manner speaks to this idea of dependency because those remarks show that he lacks agency.

⁵⁸ A more in-depth discussion of Victorian masculinity and femininity will follow in the next two sections; this example serves to showcase Holmes’s role as an enforcer of Victorian social standards, rather than an in-depth discussion of gender roles.

Race and British Masculinity in the Panopticon

I introduce here a last dimension of Sherlock Holmes's role as an enforcer of British binary ideologies: race. Sherlock Holmes is one of the first examples of a "normalizing" detective: even though he chooses to operate outside of police establishment, Holmes nevertheless works to instill social and domestic order. *The Sign of the Four* (February 1890) serves as an example of Holmes's ability to reinforce the British/other binary, which relies on racial differentiation. Race was a significant concern for Victorian society and "for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [race] was understood to be a real and fundamental human difference." Steinbach notes that as "the nineteenth century progressed, the idea [of race] took firmer hold that skin color and other external physical characteristics (rather than climate, religion, or forms of government) determined race, and that the different human races should remain separate from one another" (61). This assertion of racial distinction created a racial hierarchy and encouraged movements that endorsed racism, such as Social Darwinism and eugenics. Victorian Britons, as a whole, "believed that there were separate human races, and that whites were superior – mentally, morally, and often physically – to nonwhites. This belief undergirded their right to govern and civilize the rest of the world" (Steinbach 61). In particular, such prejudices extended not just towards Africa but also the East. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, states that the prejudice against the Orient was created to dominate, restructure, and have power over it (893). Conan Doyle, as a Victorian novelist, operates inside this discursive field that defines the Orient, and India specifically, in this fashion. The Orient, as an "other," does not fit into a specific station or fixed identity and is therefore subject to discipline and punishment. This binary is best exemplified in the character of Tonga.

The Sign of the Four begins with Miss Mary Morstan (later Mrs. Mary Watson) visiting

221B Baker Street. She has received a series of pearls from an unknown individual, the arrivals of which coincide with her father's mysterious disappearance. Sherlock Holmes traces the pearls to the now-deceased Major John Sholto, a man who denied possessing knowledge of Captain Morstan's disappearance and presumed death six years prior to Mary's arrival at Baker Street. Holmes, Watson, and Mary visit Thaddeus Sholto, Major Sholto's son. Thaddeus admits that his father murdered Captain Morstan to keep a treasure that Major Sholto and Captain Morstan found and took at the Agra fortress in 1857 during the Indian Rebellion. When Holmes, Watson, Mary, and Thaddeus visit the Major's other son, Bartholomew, they find him murdered. Holmes utilizes his Baker Street Irregulars to identify Jonathan Small, a career criminal, and Small's islander companion, Tonga, as the murderers. Holmes and Watson kill Tonga and take Small hostage, at which point Small admits to murdering Bartholomew and stealing the Agra treasure.

Tonga's characteristics and actions emphasize British masculinity's white/other racial binary. As the British nation conquered and instituted new governments in far-reaching lands, race degeneracy became another concern for the nation. "Sign" represents Victorian anxieties over the Orient and increasing contact with "othered" peoples. As such, Foucault's panopticon and its mandate to survey and punish applies here as well. Holmes again performs the role of enforcer. As stated in Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1979), the prejudice against the Orient was created to dominate, restructure, and have power over "Orientals" (893). And the private detective possesses the necessary powers to mediate between the Orient's "irrational, supernatural and foreign elements" and British rationalism (Taylor-Ide 55). Holmes's deductions about Tonga are nothing short of prejudiced. First, Holmes remarks that the native's foot is "half the size of...an ordinary man" (Conan Doyle 127). This comment implies that Tonga lacks the necessary qualifications to be a man. When Holmes deduces the tribe from whence Tonga came,

the result further emphasizes the native's fall cry from British masculinity: "They are naturally hideous, having large, misshapen heads...and distorted features...So intractable and fierce are they, that all the efforts of the British officials have failed to win them over in any degree." Tonga himself is no exception, possessing "a great, misshapen head with a shock of tangled, disheveled hair" (Conan Doyle 147, 161). Here the "Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different,' [and] thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, 'normal'" (Said 880). Tonga, therefore, belongs to a race that cannot be won over and "normalized" by the British panoptic society. Consequently, he must die because he cannot possess an appropriate identity. So, Holmes and Watson ruthlessly gun down the "unhallowed dwarf with his hideous face, and his strong yellow teeth." The last image of Tonga is of "his venomous, menacing eyes" (Conan Doyle 162). Until the end, Tonga is an alien force. The fact that until Jonathan Small gives Tonga a name the native is referred to as a "savage" by the two protagonists (Conan Doyle 146) further emphasizes the difference between Oriental and British. And no one mourns Tonga's death. Clearly, Victorians believed native races to be primitive and outside the realm of normalization; it is, as Said claims, "we" versus "they" (894). Therefore, Holmes and Watson's dramatic pursuit of Tonga is a sanctioned action because it will restore order to London and reaffirm British masculinity as the controlling force in society.

This battle between Tonga and Holmes further underscores, in addition to Holmes's panoptic power, the authority invested in the detective's masculine whiteness. While Sherlock Holmes may be a Bohemian "outsider" whose "dramatic use of animistic reason was the mass culture exemplification of a complex of ideas that circulated as part of the *fin-de-siècle* revolt against the dominant discourses of positivism, materialism, and scientific naturalism" (Saler 605), the detective is nevertheless a white, middle-class British, and specifically *English*, citizen.

Nineteenth century racial theorists privileged Anglo-Saxon whiteness as a pure ideal⁵⁹ (Walters 331). In the 1840s and 1850s, these theorists popularized “the racial science of ethnography,” which was “the discourse that attempted to define and rank human racial and ethnic groups empirically” with the white, Anglo-Saxon man at the top (Walters 334). Whereas Tonga’s imposed racial identity labels him as “other,” Sherlock Holmes’s masculine whiteness marks him as superior. In other words, “whiteness is not degenerated by, but is, rather, *generated* from the physical and psychical presence of racial Others” (Walters 335). The reader only sees Holmes’s whiteness as power because Conan Doyle places the detective against Tonga, who is not white. This superiority invests the detective with the cultural and social authority to reinforce British binaries: Tonga, or the non-white citizen, loses to Holmes, the white, Anglo-Saxon man. Therefore, Sherlock Holmes fulfills his imperialistic purpose as a British male citizen: “to govern and civilize the rest of the world” (Steinbach 61). As Anglo-Saxon men, Holmes and Watson therefore act as agents of the state in racial matters, just as they did with gender binaries.

Conclusion: The Heteronormativity of Holmes & Watson

Jesse Oak Taylor-Ide identifies Holmes as a “solitary, celibate, and ascetic outsider who defends society without being a part of it” (67). This status as an “outsider” comes, for the most part, from Holmes’s identity as a private investigator: invested with the ability to act *like* a police officer, Holmes nevertheless adheres to his own code of justice, only turning to law enforcement when he thinks doing so is in society’s best interests. For example, Holmes does not turn Mr. John Turner over to Detective Inspector Lestrade and Scotland Yard after Turner murders his neighbor, Mr. Charles McCarthy, in “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” (October 1891). Turner is

⁵⁹ In contrast, for example, to Irish citizens.

on his death bed, and to save the dead McCarthy's son from prosecution for the murder, Holmes strikes a deal with the dying murderer: "I shall jot down the facts. You will sign it, and Watson here can witness it. Then I could produce your confession at the last extremity to save young McCarthy. I promise you that I shall not use it unless it is absolutely needed" (Conan Doyle 198). In fact, here Holmes and the murderer scheme to not only avoid imprisonment for the perpetrator, but allow young McCarthy to suffer under suspicion of murder until Holmes determines that the time is "right." And Holmes enacts this extra-legal justice because, according to him, he is "no official agent" (Conan Doyle 197) and need not give Turner to Inspector Lestrade.

Holmes's identity as a private detective also means that he can easily engage in deception, such as his skill at disguise, to solve his cases. For example, in "The Adventure of Black Peter" (February 1904), Watson finds 221B Baker Street empty of Holmes; however, quite a few "rough-looking men" come by inquiring after one Captain Basil. Watson informs his readers that Holmes works under "numerous disguises and names with which he concealed his own formidable identity"; the detective also has "at least five small refuges in different parts of London, in which he was able to change his personality" (Conan Doyle 528). These disguises often fool even Watson. In "A Scandal in Bohemia," Watson is startled when a "drunken-looking groom, ill-kempt and side-whiskered, with an inflamed face and disreputable clothes" walks into the Baker Street parlor (Conan Doyle 151); this rough groom is Holmes. Additionally, in "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet" (May 1892), Watson witnesses Holmes transformed into a "common loafer" with his "collar turned up, his shiny, seedy coat, his red cravat, and his worn boots," which make the detective "a perfect sample" of that social class (Conan Doyle 290). And this use of disguise implies that Holmes can gather intel without needing the authority of a police

badge, thereby adding to his sense of mystique.

Academics and historians also cite British society's distrust in law enforcement during this time as a contributing factor to Holmes's appeal. This mistrust dates back to the early years of the nineteenth century; as Anthea Trodd asserts, novelists, as well as society in general, were suspicious of the police, specifically the detective, when the figure entered the middle-class household. This domestic space, protected by the "angel in the house," should be the "moral" superior and thereby free of crime and deviant activity. The presence of a detective, therefore, was a sign of trouble in established social constructs. Trodd cites the slow growth of London's Detective Department (founded in 1842 with eight detectives and rising to a mere 15 detectives in 1870) as "evidence of the fears surrounding its creation" (16). This distrust increased significantly during the Jack the Ripper murders in late 1888⁶⁰ because the Metropolitan Police force failed to apprehend the murderer (Walkowitz 197). As a result of this incident, Holmes did not want people to understand his position as that of police officer, as he demonstrates in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band." After Holmes and Watson finish their first meeting with Ms. Helen Stoner, the stepfather himself arrives, calling the detective a "Scotland Yard Jack-in-office." This nickname offends Holmes, who comments to Watson, "Fancy his having the insolence to confound me with the official detective force!" (Conan Doyle 245). Instead, Holmes is a vigilante: Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson repeatedly make reassuring appearances in the *Strand* to re-instill public order against murders, philanderers, criminal masterminds, and the abusive husband/father/brother.

And yet, Holmes's status as a detective who often flouts authority and outwits law enforcement means that audiences often overlook a quite simple complication: the detective, and

⁶⁰ Some sources attribute murders as late as 1892 to Jack the Ripper, but as he was never caught, the victims can never be specifically linked to him.

detective fiction in general,⁶¹ enables a policing of society and cultural standards. Specific to this chapter, Sherlock Holmes is one of the first examples of the detective genre's ability to police gender because the genre itself "reflects society's attitudes about enforcing the gender binary" (Humann 25). This connection between the detective genre and cisgenderism⁶² might seem ephemeral at first glance: detective protagonists, particularly amateur or extra-legal ones, often exhibit an attitude of rebellion or vigilantism. Sherlock Holmes is no exception to this idea, as Watson notes:

My own complete happiness, and the home-centred interests which rise up around the man who first finds himself master of his own establishment, were sufficient to absorb my attention, while Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian⁶³ soul, remained in our lodgings in Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition, the drowsiness of the drug, and the fierce energy of his own keen nature. ("A Scandal in Bohemia" 145)

Watson describes an individual removed from society, who possesses eccentric habits and shuns the domestic bliss of a man with a wife to run his household. And yet, as this chapter shows, Sherlock Holmes is an integral agent to Victorian society's stability, regardless of his overtly non-conformist attitude. Sherlock Holmes's enduring popularity underscores the fictional detective's ability to trap readers into endorsing conformity.

What Conan Doyle establishes with his consulting detective is a literary character that serves as a panopticon to uphold both cisgenderism and associated racial purity, which are intimately tied to masculinity's supremacy over the feminine, British over foreign, and the public

⁶¹ This issue remained unexplored and uncomplicated until quite recently. Heather Duerre Humann's *Gender Bending Detective Fiction* (2017) performs thorough analyses of popular detective novels and works to break down this reliance on policing society.

⁶² To reiterate from my introduction: 'cisgenderism' is defined by Humann as "the practice of enforcing the gender binary" (3); in the case of the Victorian Era, this gender binary is the idea of separate spheres and heterosexuality

⁶³ "Bohemia" is a term with varying applications and definitions; Sherlock Holmes is not one of the Bohemian literary circle as identified by Colin Cruise, but rather the detective exhibits certain bohemian characteristics, such as the ability to "mix with the working classes" (Cruise 138) and the "rejection of respectable domesticity for a life lived in public spaces – theatres, galleries and clubs" (Cruise 142).

over the private. This emphasis on cisgenderism and racial purity underscores the more sinister nature of Sherlock Holmes's detective role: it would be naïve to think that Sherlock Holmes unknowingly perpetuates established gender and racial regulations. Instead, Sherlock Holmes is *complicit*. His occasional rule bending indicates that Holmes is a discriminating detective who employs the critical thinking necessary to distinguish between “law” and “morality”; the fact that Holmes chooses never to join the British police force perhaps implies a certain amount of awareness of Victorian society's use of the panopticon, and therefore retains his independence so that he can make more nuanced decisions when necessary.

Despite the canon's frequent adherence to binaries that foster prejudices and stigmatizations, the adventures of Sherlock Holmes have remained immensely popular and pervasive. This popularity stems in part from detective fiction's utility as a form of social commentary and critique; as Heather Duerre Humann states, detective fiction is a product of mass consumption, and therefore its novels and stories possess “the ability to make [social] commentary to quite a large and diverse audience” (16). While his complicit alliance with cisgenderism is problematic (and symptomatic of a larger and lengthy trend in detective fiction⁶⁴), it is not encompassing, as Conan Doyle's treatment of the New Woman indicates. These snippets of rebellion highlight the detective genre's ability to change and adapt *if* the author chooses to do so. It is this choice and its consequences that make up the subsequent chapters in this dissertation.

⁶⁴ Humann's *Gender Bending Detective Fiction* (2017) charts the recent shift in the detective genre towards a critique of cisgenderism and gender prejudices, indicating that this genre is currently in the midst of a massive transformation in content and purpose that, unfortunately, lies outside the parameters of this chapter.

Chapter Two Re-Inventing Conan Doyle's Secondary Characters: Creating Discord in Gender and Sexuality

“There is nothing more deceptive than obvious fact”
-Sherlock Holmes, “The Boscombe Valley Mystery” (1891)

This chapter examines a set of secondary characters in specific Sherlock Holmes adaptations for television. In the Sherlock Holmes canon, these characters are Mrs. Hudson, Mary Watson, Irene Adler, and Professor Moriarty. The adapted characters are Miss Hudson (*Elementary*) and Mrs. Hudson (*Sherlock*); Mary Watson (*Sherlock*); Irene Adler (*Sherlock*) and Irene Adler/Jamie Moriarty (*Elementary*); and Jim Moriarty (*Sherlock*). These new interpretations continuously engage in “adding, supplementing, improvising, innovating, [and] amplifying” (Sanders 15) the Sherlock Holmes canon. By investing secondary characters with new agency, motivation, and significance, the adaptations under discussion here investigate new conceptions of gender and sexuality. Specifically, these adaptations voice “what the [original] text silences or marginalizes” (Sanders 23). These characters challenge audiences to re-examine Anglo-American constructions of gender and sexuality. What unites the characters under discussion here is their *fluid performances of gender and sexuality*. These performances break the gender binary, which is “the classification system of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite, and disconnected forms of male and female” (Humann 18-19). Consequently, these acts of adaptation and appropriation render Conan Doyle’s secondary characters relevant to current Anglo-American audiences. Taken together, these characters present varying challenges to current attitudes towards sex and gender, ranging from the quite progressive to the more subtle.

To frame this chapter, I will use Judith Butler’s methodology for understanding gender to craft my argument. Butler’s methodology “opens up onto a difficult terrain” (204) by examining

social and cultural forces that regulate gender. This methodology emphasizes that “it is important not only to understand how the terms of gender are instituted, naturalized, and established...but to trace the moments where the binary system of gender is disputed and challenged...and where the very social life of gender turns out to be malleable and transferrable” (Butler 216). The four characters under discussion in this chapter offer no easy answers to transcend restrictive gender binaries, but all work to challenge these hegemonic norms. As Butler further states, whether we refer “to ‘gender trouble’ or ‘gender bending,’ ‘transgender’ or ‘cross-gender,’ one is already suggesting that gender has a way of moving beyond that naturalized binary” (42-43). For this chapter, I interpret Butler’s argument as a call to identify and explore breaks in the gender binary. Each of my character analyses identifies how that specific character adaptation plays with gender binaries, and how each emphasizes gender’s malleable and transferrable nature.

Thus, my argument in this chapter approaches gender and sexuality as malleable and performed roles. Gender itself is “the apparatus by which the production and normalization of masculine and feminine take place”; additionally, this production and normalization includes “the interstitial forms of hormonal, chromosomal, psychic, and performative” qualities of gender (Butler 42). Gender therefore regulates behavior and sexuality, and a restrictive gender discourse “insists on the binary of man and woman” as the exclusive definition of the gender field (Butler 43). This regulatory and restrictive gender discourse is defined by norms, and “to veer from the gender norm is to produce the aberrant example that regulatory powers (medical, psychiatric, and legal, to name a few) may quickly exploit to shore up the rationale for their own continuing regulatory zeal” (Butler 52). However, norms are not stable artifacts. Butler states that a norm “operates within social practices as the implicit standard of *normalization*” (41); furthermore, a norm is not a *rule*, and “the norm only persists as a norm to the extent that it is acted out in social

practice and re-idealized and reinstated in and through the daily social rituals of bodily life” (48). So, norms may (and do) change in societies. Lastly, sex and sexuality are understood most often through gender norms, as norms create social intelligibility (Butler 41). Socially intelligible actions impose legitimacy on those actions; in turn, these “bodily indicators are the cultural means by which the sexed body is read” (Butler 87). Bodies that are unintelligible, then, must be put back into place.

These characters challenge such binaries because all engage in fluid performances of gender and sexuality. This fluidity exposes gender as a norm; and, as Butler points out, for “gender to be a norm suggests that it is always and only tenuously embodied by any particular social actor” (41). These adapted characters are social actors that rebel against embodying social norms, and instead deconstruct and denaturalize the gender apparatus. While some character performances are more successful than others in disrupting gender and sexuality, each character adaptation in this chapter embodies the social and cultural challenges to the traditional binary structure of gender that equates “male” with “masculine” and “female” with “feminine.”

I examine these four characters and their adaptations because they are some of the most well-known and popularized figures in the Sherlock Holmes canon, making them easily accessible for adapters to use and easily recognizable for audiences familiar with the Sherlock Holmes stories. Thus, audiences will recognize when the adaptations deviate from “traditional” representations. Other secondary characters present in these adaptations, such as Inspector Lestrade (*Sherlock*), Inspector Gregson (*Elementary*), and Kitty Winter (*Elementary*) offer insightful conversations of adaptation and contemporary Anglo-American culture, but do not fit the criteria for this chapter.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ For example, the changes to Lestrade and Gregson create characters that both bring out the more compassionate side of Holmes while exhibiting greater agency and competency. Kitty Winter’s adaptation in *Elementary* is

Additionally, these adaptations exclude other characters from the Sherlock Holmes canon that could offer further commentary on gender binaries and social constructs concerning sexuality. Specifically, contemporary Anglo-American adaptations obsess over Irene Adler while ignoring a female character whom Holmes greatly admires *and* could potentially marry.⁶⁶ This character is Miss Violet Hunter, governess in “The Adventure of the Copper Beeches” (1892). In Conan Doyle’s story, Miss Hunter comes to 221B Baker Street with concerns over her new employer, Mr. Rucastle. Holmes tells Miss Hunter that she is “a quite exceptional woman” (Conan Doyle 307) and she adeptly performs the tasks Holmes sets before her, earning the detective’s respect and admiration. Most significant, however, are Watson’s mournful remarks at the end of this story: “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, and she is now the head of a private school at Walsall” (Conan Doyle 310). Miss Hunter’s relative obscurity succinctly underscores my focus on four specific characters who hold more cultural cachet than similar, lesser-known characters from the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Mrs. Hudson: Breaking Away from Passivity to Agency

Mrs. Hudson makes her first identifiable appearance⁶⁷ in “The Sign of the Four” (1890) when Miss Mary Morstan comes to 221B Baker Street. For the first twenty-plus years of Sherlock Holmes’s publication, information concerning Mrs. Hudson is scanty at best. In “The

significant because it offers commentary on rape victims and how they cope with post-traumatic stress. While these lines of inquiry are worth study, they lie outside this chapter’s scope.

⁶⁶ In the Sherlock Holmes canon Irene Adler marries Godfrey Norton. Therefore, Irene is not a potential wife for Holmes.

⁶⁷ I use “identifiable” here because Watson notes in *A Study in Scarlet* that “The landlady had become so accustomed to my late habits that my place had not been laid nor my coffee prepared.”; in this same story, the “landlady” later exhibits “disgust” on the part of the Baker Street Irregulars. However, this landlady is never specifically identified as Mrs. Hudson.

Adventure of the Speckled Band” (1892), for example, Holmes points out that Mrs. Hudson “has had the good sense to light the fire” (Doyle 239) after escorting a new client into his parlor. Comments similar to Holmes’s in “Speckled Band” are the extent of Mrs. Hudson’s importance until “The Adventure of the Dying Detective” (1913), where Watson gives Mrs. Hudson more detailed attention. In this story, Watson’s view of Mrs. Hudson is sympathetic; he describes her as a “long-suffering woman” whose parlor is constantly subjected to the dirt of the Baker Street Irregulars. And yet, Mrs. Hudson is attached to Holmes: She “stood in the deepest awe of him and never dared to interfere with him...She was fond of him, too, for he had a remarkable gentleness and courtesy in his dealings with women,” despite Holmes’s “incredible untidiness, his addiction to music at strange hours...and the atmosphere of violence and danger which hung around him” (Conan Doyle 892). These descriptors indicate that Mrs. Hudson’s function within the Sherlock Holmes canon is to create a domestic home for detective and doctor, a domesticity which fosters the Holmes-Watson homosocial bond.

CBS Elementary’s Miss Hudson

Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu’s New York brownstone does not have a permanent housekeeper. Their *Miss Hudson*,⁶⁸ played by Candis Cayne, is a transgender artistic muse who occasionally wanders into Sherlock and Watson’s home in between torrid, passionate love affairs and performs some light housework while quoting ancient philosophers and waxing poetic about love.

Candis Cayne was born Brendan McDaniel and transitioned to “Candis” in the 1990s to become one of the most popular transgender actors in the United States; so, here, I am speaking of Cayne’s significance in a U.S.-context (rather than in an Anglo-American and transatlantic

⁶⁸ I emphasize “Miss” here because she is the first adaptation that is not married.

one⁶⁹). CBS's use of a transgender actor is a *limited* or *qualified* acknowledgement of changing gender norms. I say "acknowledgement" because Miss Hudson's role is a small one: as of August 2019, she has only been credited for three episodes: "Snow Angels" (S1E19), "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (S2E21), and "The Adventure of the Nutmeg Concoction" (S3E7). Cayne's role, then, creates a bridge between a Victorian domestic character and contemporary U.S. conversations around transgender identity. This bridge is most successful when audience members are aware of Cayne's transgenderism, and specifically her activism in promoting positive perceptions of transgenderism. Therefore, Cayne's significance to viewers in *Elementary* becomes relevant when taken in conjunction with paratextual sources.⁷⁰ For example, in an interview with Michael Podell for the *Huffington Post*, Cayne notes that she sees herself as a different kind of activist: "I'm not someone who can write legislation, I'm not somebody who is going to march down the street and fight that way. What I do as far as my role in trans activism is be on television, do interviews, and conduct myself in a way that shines a positive light on the trans community." In line with her description, Cayne's role in *Elementary* demonstrates her activism for transgender individuals.

Given Cayne's statement that acting is a part of her activism, her role as Miss Hudson takes on a very specific meaning: her sensuality paired with intellectual wit creates a positive and likeable image of transgender women. Watson first meets Miss Hudson in "Snow Angels"; Watson returns to the brownstone from an errand to discover that she and Sherlock are hosting an unexpected houseguest. When Watson asks Sherlock why Miss Hudson is staying with them

⁶⁹ I emphasize Cayne's nationality because she is more widely-known in the United States than abroad and therefore she is perhaps more easily recognized to a U.S. viewer rather than a British/transatlantic one. Additionally, *Elementary* is a U.S.-based show on the CBS network.

⁷⁰ Per my previous chapter: a paratextual source is "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public" (Genette and Maclean 261). In other words, paratextual sources are artifacts (interviews, other movies, publications, etc.) that influence audience/reader perceptions of the primary text.

for a few days, he replies that the muse has just broken off her latest love affair. Watson then notes that at some point these paramours must realize that Miss Hudson has an Adam's apple. This comment clearly identifies Miss Hudson as transgender for *Elementary*'s viewers. When Miss Hudson makes her first appearance in this episode, she is impeccably dressed in a tight-



Figure 2.1. Miss Hudson in the brownstone, S1 E19, <https://rshunter-author.com/2013/11/lets-talk-about-elementary-miss-hudson/>

fitting skirt and flowing blouse with luxurious curls and fine jewelry, as seen in fig. 2.1. Her clothing and overall style work to create an attractive, feminine character. Additionally, Sherlock explains that Miss Hudson “has an Oxford don’s knowledge of ancient Greek and she’s a complete autodidact” who has consulted with him on several Scotland Yard cases. His praise indicates that Miss Hudson,

in addition to her sex appeal, is exceedingly intelligent. And, as if these two traits were not enough in and of themselves, Miss Hudson is also a domestic goddess reminiscent of the Victorian “angel in the house.” At the end of “Snow Angels,” Watson and Sherlock return to the brownstone to find that Miss Hudson has completely rearranged the library’s contents by subject matter and author, starting with hard sciences and then in descending order of academic rigor. She says, “I have a touch of OCD. Seems to flare up after a break-up.” “Snow Angels” ends with Miss Hudson accepting a position as Sherlock and Watson’s weekly housekeeper. This complete synthesis of sensuality, intelligence, and tidiness creates a popular, likable transgender character.

Identifying and embracing Cayne’s Miss Hudson as a transgender character breaks the gender norm’s reliance on sexual difference to define “masculine” and “feminine” along “male” and “female” identities. If, as Butler states, a norm is embodied in a social actor (41), then

Cayne's role as a feminine transgender actor breaks down this gender norm, leaving viewers with a new interpretation of "feminine" that does not rely on sex. As a transgender character and actor, Candis Cayne denaturalizes gender for audiences. However, Cayne's role is, overall, conservative. Miss Hudson is beautiful according to cis standards and her intelligence is tempered by her domesticity, which reaffirms Cayne's role as a domestic character. Therefore, CBS utilizes a transgender character to acknowledge changing gender norms, but not in a contentious or openly provocative manner.

I do not offer Cayne's adherence to cis beauty as a measure to demean her role. *Elementary* audiences who recognize Cayne (and many will, given her 20+ years as a trans actor and her roles in *Dirty Sexy Money* and *I Am Cait*) will, most likely, immediately see her significance on this television show outside of its immediate context because they will connect her transgender character to paratextual knowledge.

And yet, *Elementary* writers take a risk casting Cayne: including an actor so intricately and explicitly connected with current cultural trends implies that *Elementary*'s intended viewer is deeply invested in and knowledgeable of U.S. popular culture. So, Miss Hudson's role in *Elementary* depends upon the individual audience member and may lose its effectiveness if viewed by someone not a participant in this culture. After all, audiences who do not recognize Cayne could easily assume that she is in fact a cis woman *playing* a transgender character, rather than a transgender actor. Therefore, when CBS casts Cayne in specific episodes, they simultaneously promote a form of transgender acceptance and present one type of transgender lifestyle: a cis woman. If a viewer does not recognize Cayne, CBS's intentional transgender significance is lost, or at least moot. And yet, despite the aforementioned shortcomings in Cayne's role (her cis beauty and domesticity), she represents a significant investment in a

character previously ignored or passed over in favor of more “exciting” female characters.

BBC Sherlock’s Mrs. Hudson

While Candis Cayne’s Miss Hudson appears, only to vanish again from the brownstone after a few scenes, BBC *Sherlock*’s Mrs. Hudson stubbornly refuses this marginalization. Una Stubbs may look elderly and diminutive, but she is in fact a sassy and spunky woman to whom age is just a number. Stubbs’ significance lies first and foremost in her confrontation of gender stereotypes, and specifically ageism as it applies to elderly women. Her assertiveness and domineering personality, furthermore, give her the agency to prod and challenge Sherlock and John’s ostensibly heterosexual friendship. Mrs. Hudson is no longer a passive enabler at 221B Baker Street; she is now an active, antagonizing agent that never quite believes John when he tells her that he and Sherlock are not a couple.

As an antagonizing agent, Mrs. Hudson first challenges social representations of old age. *Ageism* “refers to the prejudice and discrimination towards older persons generally” and this stigma is pervasive in Anglo-American society, especially among young adults who exhibit a prejudice against older adults (those 65 years old and above) (Thompson et al. 206, 266). This prejudice results in negative impressions of old age, like impairment and dependency; in other words, elderly people are viewed as “isolated, suffering diminishing autonomy, dependent, [and] in a state of physical or mental impairment or degeneration” (Quéniart and Charpentier 986). Mrs. Hudson’s character challenges this bias in two distinct ways: first, she is a character capable of great physical exertion, and second, she is a sexually active older adult.

Audiences quickly realize that Mrs. Hudson is not some frail elderly woman whose days consist of cleaning and drinking tea. In “A Scandal in Belgravia” (S2E1), the audience witnesses Mrs. Hudson’s stubbornness and fortitude when she refuses to succumb to torture at the hands of

U.S. agents looking for Irene Adler's camera-phone; the landlady instead keeps the phone hidden in her blouse until Sherlock comes to her rescue, at which point she chastises the detective for keeping the phone in his second-best dressing gown: "[Y]ou clot! I managed to sneak it out when they thought I was having a cry." The rough treatment does not faze Mrs. Hudson and she is quick-witted enough to protect Sherlock's most important piece of evidence. She shows the same quick-minded instinct and bold decision making in S4E2, "The Lying Detective." During this episode, Sherlock's psychological state devolves into a drug-addled rage, and Mrs. Hudson grabs Sherlock's gun, handcuffs him, and uses her employees from the bakery⁷¹ to stuff Sherlock in the boot of her car. These physical exploits counter traditional Anglo-American stereotypes of elderly women as frail and feeble, a historical issue particularly in Hollywood, where the elderly population is labeled as an "outsider" group along with other marginalized assemblies (Cones 145; 148). While *Sherlock* is a product of the BBC and not Hollywood, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' Mrs. Hudson is a direct challenge to such prejudices against the elderly. Thus, Mrs. Hudson's physical agency, despite her insistence that she's "got a hip" (S1E1), works to disable and disrupt Western cultural prejudices against the elderly, and especially elderly women.

Mrs. Hudson is also a sexually active elderly woman, and Sherlock often picks up on her amorous exploits. In the middle of a cigarette-deprived rant during "The Hounds of Baskerville" (S2E2), Sherlock informs Mrs. Hudson that her current paramour is hiding secrets: "You've been to see Mr. Chatterjee again...That's a new dress, but there's flour on the sleeve. You wouldn't dress like that for baking...Don't pin your hopes from that cruise with Mr. Chatterjee, he's got a wife in Doncaster that nobody knows about." Sherlock's implication, of course, is that Mrs. Hudson is engaging in a sexual relationship with Mr. Chatterjee, who is cheating on his wife.

⁷¹ In addition to owning rental property on Baker Street, Mrs. Hudson owns the bakery on the ground floor of Sherlock and John's apartment.

These exploits are comical when contrasted with Mrs. Hudson's disparaging comments over Sherlock's sexual ringtone for Irene Adler, "Oh, that's a bit rude, isn't it?" (S2E1), and her indignation when Sherlock discovers that there are hidden cameras in the flat, "Oh, I'm in my nightie!" (S2E3) (which calls attention to her body as a physical object subject to inspection). Mrs. Hudson's sexual adventures are significant because, as noted earlier, while many young adults explicitly endorse an active sexual life for the elderly, scientific studies reveal that a significant percentage of those same young adults implicitly view "sex for older adults [as] unimportant, inappropriate, or irrelevant"⁷² due to preconceived notions linking sexuality with youth and fertility (Thompson et al. 260). The young adult age range is significant here because, while *Sherlock's* popularity spans generations, the show's content and its online fanbase fall within this age range. Thompson et al.'s study, based in North America, indicates that Moffat and Gatiss' choice to create a sexually active older woman confronts stigmatizing viewpoints on sexuality and age. This rhetorical choice produces room for audiences to reevaluate how Anglo-American society approaches societal and cultural prejudices concerning its elderly citizens.

In addition to Mrs. Hudson's sexual and physical exertions, the little hints concerning her past scattered throughout the series offer audiences another lens through which they can evaluate the diminutive landlady. The audience never learns the full details of Mrs. Hudson's past, but the clues indicate a history of felony and wealth. In "A Study in Pink" (S1E1), Sherlock explains to John that he leases the 221B Baker Street flat from a "Mrs. Hudson," who owes him a small favor for framing her husband for murder in Florida. The viewer does not fully understand the implications of Mrs. Hudson's past, however, until S4E2, when Mrs. Hudson arrives in an Aston

⁷² There are, of course, variants here; Thompson et al.'s article does also mention that two or three studies performed in recent years show that not all young adults view elderly sexual activity in a negative light. However, overall, this issue is still a significant one that increases Stubbs' importance.

Martin with a squad of police cars to deliver Sherlock to John, who is currently in the middle of a therapy session. After John exclaims that he does not understand how Mrs. Hudson can afford an Aston Martin, she indignantly replies, “Oh for god’s sake! I’m the widow of a drug dealer, I own property in Central London, and for the last bloody time, John, I’m not your housekeeper!” In this single sentence, Mrs. Hudson challenges over one hundred years of passivity on the part of the housekeeper/landlady at 221B Baker Street.

In addition to her more radical role as an elderly woman, Stubbs’s character is a rather enigmatic landlady who tends to be more intrusive and less domestic than Cayne’s character. Specifically, Mrs. Hudson’s use of speech to both emphasize her agency and interrogate the homosocial relationship between Sherlock and John rewrites women’s speech into a feminist language. As Cheris Kramarae states in “Proprietors of Language,” “Women’s speech has been described as polite, emotional, enthusiastic, gossipy, talkative, uncertain, dull, and chatty; men’s speech, in contrast, as capable, direct, rational, illustrating a sense of humor, unfeeling, strong (in tone and word choice), and blunt” (9). Mrs. Hudson flips these stereotypes because her speech is humorous and decisive, emotional, and blunt. She synthesizes a new system of language that fulfills her need for self-expression. In doing so, Mrs. Hudson embodies a feminism that challenges patriarchal domination and oppression in language systems.

Mrs. Hudson’s domesticity is fleeting and cursory at best. For example, in “A Study in Pink” Mrs. Hudson exclaims, “Oh. Sherlock, the mess you’ve made,” and commences cleaning up the kitchen while Sherlock and John get to know one another. Not five minutes later, she switches from doting to defiant when Sherlock says he will be out late with Lestrade and “might need some food”: “I’m your landlady, dear, not your housekeeper.” She emphasizes this difference again when she offers to make John a cuppa:

Mrs. Hudson: I'll make you that cuppa, you rest your leg.
John: Damn my leg! Sorry, I'm so sorry. It's just sometimes this bloody thing...
Mrs. Hudson: I understand, dear, I've got a hip.
John: Cup of tea would be lovely, thank you.
Mrs. Hudson: Just this once, dear, I'm not your housekeeper.
John: Couple of biscuits too, if you've got 'em.
Mrs. Hudson: Not your housekeeper!⁷³

This example of domestic doting and indignant denial represents Mrs. Hudson's interactions with her two lodgers. For example, at the beginning of "The Sign of Three" (S3E2), Mrs. Hudson brings Sherlock his morning tea, teasing him about his dance practice for John and Mary's wedding. She then completely ignores Sherlock's hints to refill her biscuit supply and drones on about marriage changing friendships until Sherlock yells "Biscuits!" and she storms out of the room. Moreover, Mrs. Hudson *does* occasionally refill their fridge with actual food, a nice change from eyeballs and the occasional severed head (S1E3). Academic critics such as Zea Miller argue that this contradiction in Mrs. Hudson's personality reduces the landlady's agency and relegates her to a simple tool for Moffat and Gatiss's play on a homosexual relationship between Sherlock and John; in this academic perspective, Mrs. Hudson is the "quintessential aggrieved woman" who "facilitates a home for two adult men and does so not only without thanks but also with cold dismissals" (Z. Miller 215-16). While Miller's points are effective, I argue that Mrs. Hudson's character is more nuanced. I interpret Mrs. Hudson's role in these examples as an agent of change. Mrs. Hudson embodies and pushes back against language stereotypes as identified by Cherise Kramarae, which I discussed previously in this analysis. In other words, Mrs. Hudson's language crafts a new dialogue that both embraces feminist ideas of caring⁷⁴ while utilizing this masculine notion of strong and direct speech (she is most decidedly

⁷³ For Mrs. Hudson, a landlady is someone who collects the rent and owns the rooms; a housekeeper, like Mrs. Hudson's role in Conan Doyle's canon, caters to the renters and performs duties such as cleaning and cooking.

⁷⁴ Christina Hughes' *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* tackles the contradictory understanding of "care" in feminist scholarship and emphasizes that care "is both posited as a hallmark of woman's difference and it

not the housekeeper).

Additionally, Mrs. Hudson's pervasive and insistent questioning of John and Sherlock's relationship amplifies her agency, a significant change to the original character. Instead of reinforcing a heteronormative homosocial relationship, Mrs. Hudson barrages Sherlock and John with assumptions that they are secretly a homosexual couple. In performing this vocal challenge, Mrs. Hudson uses language developed by men (Kramarae 12) to question the behavior of two men. When Sherlock first brings John around to 221B Baker Street to see the accommodations, Mrs. Hudson says, "There's another bedroom upstairs, if you'll be needing two bedrooms," indicating her almost instantaneous assumption (Sherlock has only introduced John to the landlady minutes prior to her comment) that he and Sherlock are sexual partners. She even assures John that she does not mind, and that her neighboring landlady has two "married ones" (S1E1). Mrs. Hudson's constant commentary give her agency because she imposes herself and her opinions onto the Sherlock-John relationship, both without their consent and in spite of John's obvious discomfort. Such commentary is comical, as seen in S3E1, "The Empty Hearse," when John visits Mrs. Hudson to tell him that he's getting married:

John: Yeah. We're getting married. Well, I'm going to ask, anyway.

Mrs. Hudson: So soon after Sherlock?

John: Hmm, well, yes.

Mrs. Hudson: What's his name?

John: (Sighing) It's a woman.

Mrs. Hudson: A woman?!

John: Yes, of course it's a woman.

Mrs. Hudson: You really have moved on, haven't you?

Two years have passed since John first met Mrs. Hudson, and despite John's insistence that he

is viewed as an entrapment of subservience from which woman must escape" (108). In this context, I understand Mrs. Hudson's care as a hallmark of woman's difference, and that it must be recognized as an economic factor (C. Hughes 107). So, when John and Sherlock take Mrs. Hudson's care as a necessary act without acknowledging her agency, she retaliates by stating that she isn't the housekeeper or storming out of the room.

was never Sherlock's boyfriend, Mrs. Hudson still assumes that they were romantically involved. In this consistent, verbal provocation to Sherlock and John's platonic relationship, I see Mrs. Hudson challenging the patriarchal language code. Kramarae notes that "women will not be equal participants or successful negotiators if the language code does not serve them equally" (16). Mrs. Hudson's combative attitude towards Sherlock and John successfully equalizes the playing field between an elderly, female landlady and her two masculine, virile tenants.

Overall, Cayne's and Stubbs' reinterpretations of Conan Doyle's Mrs. Hudson play with gender by de-naturalizing cultural assumptions that dominate society's understanding of "woman." Cayne, as a transgender actress, deconstructs gender's control of "feminine" while Stubbs denaturalizes societal expectations of elderly women and the nature of Anglo-American society's language code. Both characters find new life in these post-2010 adaptations. Butler identifies gender's role as an apparatus that "individuals seek to approximate" (48). Cayne's and Stubbs' characters defy this need to approximate the norm's model, instead playing with constructed characteristics associated with their gender identities.

Mary Watson: Assassin, Wife, and Mother

While Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes may thrive in a bohemian bachelor pad with his myriad of scientific experiments and occasional doses of cocaine, Dr. John Watson is the quintessential British middle-class man who settles down with a wife, child, and a respectable trade. It is in this familial tradition that Mary Watson finds her significance in the original canon: she is the quite literal embodiment of John Watson's heterosexuality. When Mary Morstan first appears in "The Sign of the Four" (1890) she exhibits an independence that challenges the "angel in the house" trope. Sherlock Holmes himself comments that Miss Morstan is "one of the most

charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way; witness the way in which she preserved that Agra plan from all the other papers of her father” (Conan Doyle 140). Unfortunately, after she agrees to marry Watson, Mary loses all value to Holmes and Conan Doyle. A few cases later in “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (1891), Mrs. Watson sits demurely with her “needle-work” (Conan Doyle 212) and quickly fades into the background as Watson and Holmes set out to solve the mystery of Isa Whitney’s disappearance. BBC’s Mary Watson does not fall prey to the same domesticity. This Mary Watson utilizes gender fluidity to create an almost contradictory duality: Amanda Abbington’s character turns the Sherlock-John homosocial relationship into a polyamory.

BBC Sherlock’s Mary Watson

Abbington’s Mary Watson is a CIA assassin-turned-receptionist. Her significance lies in her complete shift in relation to the Holmes-Watson bond: Mary Watson’s intimate status as the third party in the Sherlock-John relationship creates room for female agency that not only rivals but *participates* in the masculine Sherlock Holmes canon. Mary Watson situates herself inside it the homosocial relationship to nourish and reinforce the bond between Sherlock and John. In Mary Watson we see how feminism “is about the social transformation of gender relations” (Butler 204). In other words, Mary’s gender fluidity transforms the homosocial bond into a polyamory that includes a transgressive female character. The homosocial bond is no longer solidified over a dead or disenfranchised body of a woman.⁷⁵ However, by nourishing and strengthening the Sherlock-John relationship, Mary Watson also makes her physical presence *unnecessary*. This contradiction emphasizes the literary determinism inherent in the Sherlock-

⁷⁵ I am again referencing Eve Sedgwick’s argument in *Between Men* that the male homosocial bond is “a transaction of honor” over “the dead, discredited, or disempowered body of a woman” (137).

John relationship: while Mary lives, she is an equal third party. But for Sherlock and John’s relationship to reach its full potential, she must die. With her death, Mary leaves Sherlock and John with a permanent bond in the form of Rosie, her and John’s baby.

Mary Watson embodies Butler’s assertion that feminism is “the social transformation of gender relations” (204). Abbingdon’s character is a progressive feminist woman who challenges the binaries of “feminine”

and “masculine” by

working as a caring

domestic partner *and*

ruthless assassin, both of

which underscore

Mary’s assertive will



Figure 2.2. Left: Mary at her wedding to John, S3E3, <http://www.denofgeek.com/tv/sherlock/28787/what-do-we-know-about-sherlock%E2%80%99s-mary-morstan>; Right: Mary shooting Sherlock when he interrupts her attack on Magnussen, S3E3, personal screenshot

power. Mary Watson makes her first appearance in “The Empty Hearse” (S3E1); she and John are seated at an elegant restaurant, and John is about to propose when Sherlock miraculously comes back from the dead. Throughout this third season, Mary endears herself to *both* Sherlock and John, and all three exist in a symbiosis until her past is exposed in “His Last Vow” (S3E3). A former CIA assassin, “Mary Watson” is an assumed identity, and the viewer never knows her real name. While “His Last Vow” begins with Sherlock and John investigating Charles Augustus Magnussen, a criminal mastermind just as devious as Jim Moriarty but without the flamboyance or playful teasing, this episode is noteworthy because it underscores Mary’s significance as a feminist character.

In “His Last Vow,” Mary emphasizes Gloria Anzaldúa’s argument that today’s “categories of race and gender are more permeable and flexible” than in the past (100).

Specifically, in this episode Mary is transforming ideas of “woman” by blurring the boundaries of “feminine” and “masculine.” This episode reveals to audiences that Magnussen is blackmailing Mary with knowledge of her secret identity, and she makes the decision to kill him at all costs, a commitment that includes shooting Sherlock. Sherlock, on his own warpath against Magnussen, worms his way into the magnate’s office only to find that Mary has beaten him to the chase. She is dressed in her black assassin’s gear, and a flashback scene in slow-motion shows Mary violently attacking Magnussen with the butt of her gun. This image is a sharp contrast to the previous episode, with Mary in her wedding dress, all smiles and laughter and pregnant (S3E2) (see fig. 2.2). This visual key for viewers emphasizes that CIA Mary Watson is “the antithesis of Victorian womanhood” (Lane 239). The authorial choice to give Mary this violent backstory creates a union between a stereotypically masculine trait (violence) with a conventionally feminine trait (motherhood).

As Mary’s role in *Sherlock* series progresses, the audience sees that she also exhibits traditional “feminine” traits, particularly in her ability to care for others and sacrifice herself for love. For example, at the beginning of “His Last Vow,” Mary and John’s neighbor arrives sobbing at their door because her son is missing. While John is rather flippant (“He’s the drugs one?”), Mary is kind: she sits down beside the grieving mother and holds her hand. This dedication and caring stands in sharp contrast to Mary’s ruthlessness as an assassin. Mary’s greatest moment of selfless love comes in “The Six Thatchers” (S4E1), when she takes a bullet meant for Sherlock. She dies, and her death symbolizes her love for *both* Sherlock and John. As she dies in John’s arms, Mary tells him, “You’ve made me so happy. You gave me everything I could have ever, ever wanted... You were my whole world. Being Mary Watson was the only life worth living. Thank you.” In this act, Mary epitomizes traditionally-feminine characteristics of

care and wifely devotion. Mary is also a dedicated mother. For example, viewers see that while John struggles with his conscience and continues to text a mysterious woman shortly after their baby's birth, Mary gets up at all hours to attend to baby Rosie (S4E1). The synthesis of these masculine/feminine binaries works to discredit or modify conventional beliefs *behind* the binaries. To use Butler's terminology, Mary Watson suggests that "gender has a way of moving beyond that naturalized binary" (42-43). The audience is forced to understand how a woman can exhibit both uninhibited violence and devoted motherhood.

Furthermore, Mary engages in traditionally feminine roles such as wife and mother without compromising her independence because Mary avoids the Victorian "little woman" stereotype (Lane 239). Therefore, Abbington's Mary Watson succeeds where Conan Doyle's Mary Morstan fails: Mary Watson does not lose her agency after marriage. Instead, she constantly and consistently challenges John's patriarchal pampering. For example, in "The Six Thatchers," Mary informs John that they've "gone off" "Catherine" as a name for their baby in response to John indicating to Mrs. Hudson that they have decided to name their daughter "Catherine." This domestic authority embodies itself in later episodes through John's ready yielding to Mary's wishes, even when her wishes conflict with his assumed role as the traditional masculine husband and Mary as the traditional feminine wife. For example, John often tries to take the lead when his wife is present:

John: I'm taking Mary home.
Mary: You're what?
John: Mary is taking me home.
Mary: Better. ("The Abominable Bride," S4E0)

This exchange creates an equal heterosexual relationship, something Butler notes as a significant argument for feminist activist and scholar Catharine MacKinnon. For MacKinnon, "the hierarchical structure of heterosexuality in which men are understood to subordinate women is

what produces gender” (53). By upending this subordination, Mary Watson questions *how* society produces gender, and specifically the gendered understanding of a patriarchy.

Perhaps most significantly, after Mary enters the Sherlock-John relationship she becomes an equal partner, thus creating a modified polyamory (I say “modified” here because the only



Figure 2.3. Mary, Sherlock, John, and baby Rosie on an adventure (S4 E1), <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/1075930878579324131/>

sexual relationship is that between John and Mary;

therefore, this polyamory relies on emotion rather than physical fulfillment for all three parties). For example, in

“The Six Thatchers” Sherlock assures John that a meeting with Lestrade one evening to work on a case is okay with Mary, indicating that her approval is necessary for both

men. Later *still* in this episode, Mary hands Rosie off to

John before she and Sherlock take a legendary bloodhound

named Toby out on a hunt. Sherlock explains that this arrangement is necessary because Mary is “better” at this task because of her background as an assassin. However, in the end all three venture off with Toby, baby Rosie in tow (see fig. 2.3). This scene is significant because Sherlock confirms Mary’s status in the polyamory.

Prior to Season 4, Mary establishes herself as a true friend to Sherlock, and this friendship is based on mutual understanding of one another *and* a desire to protect John. Thus, the desire for John’s safety is what unites Mary and Sherlock in the polyamory. For example, in “The Sign of Three” (S3E2) Mary tries to comfort Sherlock as he fumes over John’s puppy eyes for Major Sholto: “Neither of us were the first, you know.” Later, too, Sherlock’s best man speech at the wedding embodies this idea of a union between Sherlock and Mary to support John; Sherlock tells the couple,

Mary, when I say you deserve this man, it is the highest compliment of which I am capable... [John, today] you sit between the woman you have made your wife and the man you have saved. In short, the two people who love you most in all this world. And I know I speak for Mary as well when I say we will never let you down and we have a lifetime ahead to prove that.

This inclusion of words such as “the two” and “we” indicate a union between Sherlock and Mary, making Mary an integral part of not just John’s but Sherlock’s life as well. Sherlock renews this union in “The Six Thatchers” when he “vow[s] to keep [her] safe.” Significantly, too, Mary calls Sherlock “Sherlock the Dragon Slayer” in this episode, indicating that she sees Sherlock as a loyal and devoted friend.

Mary’s integral role in the polyamory is best exemplified in “The Sign of Three” and “The Six Thatchers.” In “The Sign of Three,” Mary is a constant presence in 221B Baker Street. She has invaded the apartment with wedding planning, and Sherlock’s approval is evident in his willingness to turn his talents to helping Mary. Sherlock provides Mary with a list of all of John’s relatives who do not like her; he also practices transforming napkins into elaborate shapes for the reception’s place settings. Additionally, Mary manages to manipulate both Sherlock and John into putting themselves on a case, dubbed “The Bloody Guardsman,” so that she can have some time to herself. This intimacy continues in “The Six Thatchers”: the domestic scene in 221B Baker Street includes not just Sherlock and John but also a very pregnant Mary. Sherlock’s presence for Rosie’s birth in the back of a cab makes him a surrogate parent and further solidifies the polyamory. Lastly, unlike Irene Adler or other Mary Watson adaptations, Mary’s death at the end of “The Six Thatchers” almost permanently breaks the Sherlock-John bond (or, at least, Gatiss and Moffat create the illusion that her death holds this power). Illusory or not, the greater point is that it is Mary’s memory that brings the two men back together and further strengthens their bond, with the implication at the end of “The Final Problem” that Sherlock and John live

and work in a harmonious household.

The crux of the “The Six Thatchers” is Mary’s death, which is significant because it eliminates her from the *physical* Sherlock-John relationship. This disappearance can potentially lead critics and academics to see Mary Watson as just another female victim to the masculine brotherhood because, in the end, her role constitutes a tool for John Watson to establish his heterosexuality (even giving him a child to “prove” it, too) against Sherlock Holmes’s unknown sexual orientation. (Therefore, if one of these two men is heterosexual, then there is no possibility of a homosexual relationship, no matter the other partner’s orientation.) And yet, Mary does not wholly disappear from *Sherlock*.

Instead, “The Final Problem” ends with Mary’s voice narrating the deeds of Sherlock and John, while scenes flash across the screen depicting the two men in various domestic and adventurous activities. Specifically, these scenes include baby Rosie with Sherlock and John: as seen in fig. 2.4, Sherlock is holding the baby and passing her off



Figure 2.4. Sherlock handing baby Rosie off to John while they all live together at 221B Baker Street after Mary’s death (S4 E3), personal screenshot.

to her father. As Sherlock hands Rosie over to John, Mary says, “When all else fails, there are two men, sitting, arguing in a scruffy flat, like they’ve always been there and they always will. The best and wisest men I have ever known, my Baker Street boys, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson.” Mary’s voiceover asserts several key points here: first, that Sherlock and John will always help clients; second, that they are men of justice (the ‘best’ and the ‘wisest’); and, third, that they are *her* “Baker Street boys.” Using “my” here indicates that Mary has shaped

Sherlock and John into who they are today, and that her influence is permanent. Sherlock and John will always live and solve crimes together. Mary's importance comes from her influence over the homosocial bond and positive reinforcement of feminist principles as depicted in Anglo-American culture. She also embodies Judith Halberstam's argument that maleness is not synonymous with masculinity, and that gendered concepts of "masculine" "must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects" (1). Perhaps most significantly, Mary is never truly "gone" because she is Rosie's mother, and that biological connection means that the polyamory has shifted: the homosocial Sherlock-John relationship is now at the mercy of a new third party, the baby Rosie. Therefore, Mary Watson's adaptation is a struggle for equality: while she asserts herself as an active third member of the Sherlock-John homosocial bond who aggressively challenges gender norms, her death ultimately relegates her to a secondary status, not entirely dissimilar to her progenitor in the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Irene Adler: From Dominatrix to Criminal Tycoon

Perhaps more recognizable to Sherlock Holmes fans than Mrs. Hudson and Mary Watson is "the woman": Miss Irene Adler, later Mrs. Godfrey Norton. As explored in my first chapter, Conan Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" is structured around commentary on the Victorian Era's "New Woman," embodied in the character of Adler. Broadly speaking, no adaptation is complete without an appearance from "*the woman*" because she is the only *female* character to successfully outwit the consulting detective. She is a woman who uses a man's wits to outwit a man in his own environment, and, most significantly, *she gets away with it*. Her infamous line, "Good night, Mr. Holmes," represents her final and unnegotiable triumph over the detective, which symbolically celebrates a woman's triumph over the patriarchy.

Most recently, actors such as Rachel McAdams, Lara Pulver, and Natalie Dormer (the last two of whom will be the subject of this examination) have played the character of Irene Adler. These modern adaptations of Irene Adler struggle to recraft the New Woman into a strong character; I use the word “struggle” because gender norms still occur in twenty-first century Anglo-American culture and are often depicted in conjunction with more feminist and forward-thinking ideals. Thus, the Irene Adler adaptations under discussion here offer no easy answers to viewers searching for a strong female character. Pulver’s Irene Adler is a successful dominatrix working in London; Natalie Dormer’s Irene Adler is a criminal tycoon whose day job is restoring (and occasionally stealing) world-renowned artwork.⁷⁶ These two adaptations and their plot lines are aberrant examples that disrupt the regulatory work of gender (Butler 52-53). Their fates, furthermore, exemplify how a norm can reestablish itself by villainizing those who refuse this “regulatory enforcement” (Butler 53).

BBC Sherlock’s Irene Adler

Sherlock’s Irene Adler is not an adapted or updated representation of Conan Doyle’s “New Woman”; rather, I argue that Pulver’s character is a contemporary appropriation⁷⁷ of the mid-Victorian *femme fatale*, as defined by Jennifer Hedgecock’s *The Femme Fatale in Victorian Literature* (2008). Pulver’s Adler transgresses social boundaries and challenges conventional values; she arouses viewer curiosity and “represents disorder and ambiguity,” working to break down efforts to categorize femininity (Hedgecock 10). While both the New Woman and *femme*

⁷⁶ I do not include Rachel McAdams’s portrayal of Irene Adler here because she does not exhibit any significant challenges to gender and sexuality. As mentioned in my previous chapter with my analysis of Sherry Thomas’s Lady Charlotte as a Neo-Victorian New Woman, Rachel McAdams only possesses a superficial engagement with feminism, an engagement which quickly falls away as she becomes more dependent upon Sherlock Holmes (Robert Downey Jr.) in *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and dead in the first few minutes of *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011).

⁷⁷ I use “appropriation” here specifically because Moffat and Gatiss (most likely) did not intend to make this connection, and this new *femme fatale* is a loose interpretation, rather than a stricter adaptation.

fatale “embod[y] female rebellion, exposing sexual exploitation,” the New Woman is also an “agent of social and political transformation,” and this agency separates her from the *femme fatale* (Hedgecock 18-19). So, while the *femme fatale* is perhaps a “step down” from Conan Doyle’s original New Woman, Pulver’s Adler nevertheless challenges traditional views of feminine and masculine binaries by coupling stimulating beauty and sexuality with thrilling violence. Miss Adler’s roiling sexuality combined with effective use of violence, in other words, forces audiences to step away from their preconceived notions of “femininity.”

Pulver’s Adler embodies key characteristics of the *femme fatale*. First, the mid-Victorian *femme fatale* relies on promiscuity and bending social norms to achieve economic independence



Figure 2.5. Irene Adler in her dressing room in Belgravia; S3 E2, “A Scandal in Belgravia”; <https://kristinkoga.wordpress.com/2011/12/26/sherlock-series-2-irene-adler/>

(Hedgecock 32). As a dominatrix, Adler utilizes her sexuality to make a (quite successful) living. She markets herself as “The Woman” and her website displays her stereotypically-feminine beauty (see fig. 2.5). When Miss Adler makes her first appearance in “A Scandal in Belgravia” (S2E1), she wears a sheer lace dressing gown,

carrying a riding crop, and asking a female in a darkened bedroom if she’s “ready,” to which the unknown female replies, “Yes, Miss Adler.” This opening image clearly marks Miss Adler as a both a promiscuous female and Alpha personality. Additionally, the conversation at Buckingham Palace between Mycroft, Sherlock, and John marks Adler’s status as a dominatrix as one of power.⁷⁸ Mycroft has hired Sherlock and John to engage with Irene Adler on behalf of an official

⁷⁸ Mycroft has called on Sherlock and John to procure Irene Adler’s camera-phone for an official at Buckingham Palace. While never explicitly mentioned, Sherlock and John assume that they are working for the Queen or another female member of the Royal family.

at Buckingham Palace to procure some damaging photographs, and Sherlock's responses emphasize the dominatrix's power:

Sherlock: Pay her, now and in full. As Miss Adler remarks in her masthead, know when you are beaten.

Mycroft: She doesn't want anything. She got in touch, she informed us that the photographs existed, she indicated that she had no intention to use them to extort either money or favour.

Sherlock: Oh, a power play. A power play with the most powerful family in Britain. Now, that is a dominatrix. Ooh, this is getting rather fun, isn't it?

Sherlock assures Mycroft that he will have the photographs by the end of the day, and he and John promptly exit the Palace. From this conversation, viewers expect an Irene Adler as cunning and devious as she is sexy. Indeed, her actions I have discussed thus far mark her as a powerful *femme fatale* whose sexual confidence (viewers can assume) rivals Sherlock's intellectual confidence. However, academic criticism has not given Pulver's character such credit.

Pulver's critics are concerned with her reliance solely on her sexuality rather than her wits and her blatant disregard for the understood rules that protect the BD/SM culture. For example, Benedict Turner notes that Moffat and Gatiss sacrificed Doyle's richly unique Irene Adler and grafted that character's poise, cunning, and wit onto Jim Moriarty (22). Now, Adler is simply an object of feminine beauty who must rely on a man⁷⁹ to battle against Sherlock and John. In other words, Pulver's Adler is capable of performing only one role: that of a "conventionally feminine dominatrix" (Turner 28). Maria Alberto also points out that Adler "ignores the imperative concept of consent that would be observed and respected by a professional BDSM practitioner" when she drugs Sherlock and flippantly remarks that she

⁷⁹ This man is Jim Moriarty. As Adler's story unfolds in "A Scandal in Belgravia," Sherlock and John learn that Adler is working with Moriarty to trick the Holmes brothers into giving Adler immunity for her various transgressions.

knows what various men “like” (75). Alberto, too, latches onto Moffat and Gatiss’ inability to create an Irene Adler equal to Conan Doyle’s original character. Alberto emphasizes that

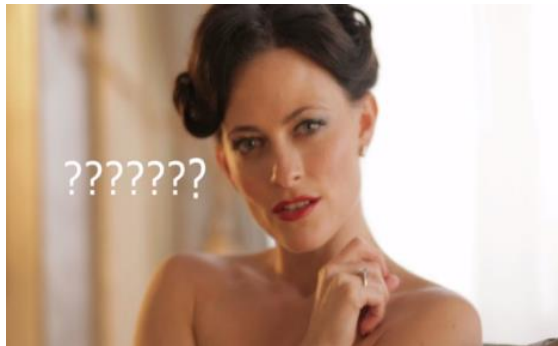


Figure 2.6. Irene Adler in her “battle dress”; S3 E2, “A Scandal in Belgravia”; personal screen

Pulver’s Adler is a “postfeminist femme fatale” who creates an “illusion of power” but is, ultimately, a narrative device rather than an actual character (68). Specifically, Alberto argues that Adler represents an authorial step backwards in gender roles that relies on stereotypes, and that her

agency only exists for male pleasure (70-71). While these arguments are valid and inform my critique of *Sherlock*, I do not think audiences and critics should be so quick to dismiss the dominatrix.

Pulver’s Adler merits more sympathetic criticism, and for two distinct reasons. First, this Adler’s sexuality disrupts and antagonizes the masculine order, and does so in a way more akin to the mid-Victorian *femme fatale* instead of Alberto’s “postfeminist” femme fatale. While Irene Adler is not a prostitute, Mycroft and John view the dominatrix as a signifier of moral indecency and sexual deviance. This uncomfortableness with Adler echoes Victorian apprehensions concerning the prostitute, who was “the embodiment of the corporeal smells and animal passions that the rational bourgeois male that repudiated and that the virtuous woman, the spiritualized ‘angel in the house,’ had suppressed” (Walkowitz 21). Pulver’s Adler does not create the illusion of power, but rather enacts a *war* against Moffat and Gatiss’ hyper-masculine order by challenging the binary of a “good” woman and a “bad” one. Adler, as the viewer sees in *Sherlock* and Adler’s first meeting, cannot be categorized or contained. This fluidity speaks to Doyle’s agenda with his *Sherlock Holmes* stories; “Doyle consistently defined masculinity,

whether in men or women, as the courageous encounter with a potentially annihilating otherness” (Barsham 5). Irene Adler’s fluidity embodies this “otherness.” As a confident sexual dominatrix, Miss Adler is an extreme “other” in comparison to the hyper-masculine environment at 221B Baker Street, which becomes apparent when Sherlock fails to “read”⁸⁰ Irene Adler during their first encounter, specifically because she is *naked*: after their meeting with Mycroft at Buckingham Palace, Sherlock believes he has devised a cunning and foolproof way to enter Irene Adler’s household in Belgravia to steal the camera-phone. However, when Sherlock and John believe they have cunningly wormed their way into Miss Adler’s household, she is one step ahead of them, having prepared for their arrival: Irene Adler confronts Sherlock in her parlor wearing only her “battle dress,” which is her naked body.

Miss Adler’s sexuality enables her to avoid categorization by the masculine order, of which Sherlock acts as gatekeeper in his traditional role from Conan Doyle’s stories. As shown in fig. 2.6, Adler defies Sherlock’s penetrating, masculine gaze. These question marks in Sherlock’s reading stand in contrast to Sherlock’s subsequent examination of John (who, for example, used a new toothbrush that morning and has a date tonight). Here, Adler parallels the mid-Victorian *femme fatale*, and defies all attempts to read or contain her (Hedgecock 23). Additionally, the dominatrix’s question marks mean that Sherlock is now in a reversed role, with Adler as the dominant and the consulting detective as the submissive, specifically because he cannot sift out her weaknesses and use them against her.

John’s reaction in this same scene exemplifies masculinity’s need for containment. John demonstrates this urge to contain and put away the sexuality exuding from Adler’s “battle dress.”

⁸⁰ Normally, when Sherlock “reads” a person in *Sherlock*, white words reveal details from daily habits to what they ate for breakfast or where they spent the night. Please see my second chapter for a more detailed discussion of the BBC’s techniques to visualize Sherlock’s ratiocination.

When he first walks into Adler's parlor, John cannot help staring at the naked female body in front of him. This shock soon turns to immense discomfort, and he pleads for the dominatrix to clothe herself: "Could you put something on, please? Er, anything at all, a napkin?" The absurdity of the napkin comment clearly indicates that John is struggling to find some way, really any way, of placing Adler in a *normative* context. This scene again underscores Kramarae's argument that women's "experience when recorded has usually been recorded by men and through the medium of a language developed by men" (12). John's metaphorical attempt to "record" Adler does not succeed, and the dominatrix promptly turns language against the good doctor: ever the consummate wit, Adler replies, "Why? Are you feeling exposed?" Here, she twists John's inability to cope with her naked body back to his own feelings of exposure because he, literally, cannot contain the dominatrix. So, while Adler's reliance on her sexuality is less enlightening than Conan Doyle's original character, critics and audiences should not be quick to dismiss Pulver's Adler; she exposes Anglo-American culture's entrenched notions of containment and concealment of the naked female body.⁸¹ Specifically, in this scene Pulver's Adler parallels Conan Doyle's original creation because both Irene Adlers defy gender expectations: Pulver's Adler turns female sexuality against the male in a similar manner to the original Adler's use of male clothing to expose the male's inability to see past gendered clothing

⁸¹Additionally, in interviews about her role as Irene Adler, Pulver states that she felt empowered and enthralled with her role, particularly with the "battle dress" scene. In an interview with Rosamund Urwin from *EveningStandard*, Pulver admits that shooting the battle dress scene was a "logistical nightmare" but that she wanted to do the scene completely nude, and that the thought of a gel bra or pants made her feel uncomfortable. In fact, Pulver says that the complete nudity was empowering; she was in her "rawest physical form" and tried to embody her character because "Irene Adler does not have a problem with nudity or her sexuality." Most significant, however, is Lara's answer to the question as to whether or not Irene Adler is a feminist: "She's a huge pioneer for women. She totally embraces being a woman. She has insecurities and flaws that make her act in extremes but I don't think she's anti-feminist." Pulver's role as Irene Adler drew nine million viewers the first night, and has garnered almost three million iPlayer viewers (Urwin). Clearly Pulver sees her Irene Adler as a woman who not only oozes sexuality but is also not afraid to take a riding crop to Sherlock Holmes.

(Conan Doyle 158).

Additionally, the scene in Buckingham Palace sets up Miss Adler as an outlier for the patriarchy to correct. Mycroft, Sherlock, John, and a Palace official sit in the historical seat of patriarchal authority in Britain and make plans to rob “The Woman” of her *rightful* property because it poses a threat to the Royal family. This need to “best” Adler and reclaim her property, I argue, creates parallels to rape and violation. Even though Sherlock tells Mycroft to leave Adler alone, Sherlock and John nevertheless decide to challenge Adler and steal her phone with the incriminating evidence. Why? Solely because Sherlock wants to participate in Adler’s power play against “the most powerful family in Britain” (S2E1). In this respect, Adler is the victim of violation. Sherlock’s need to participate reveals two key points about the Sherlock-John relationship: first, that the men are comfortable engaging in unlawful acts for the pleasure of it; and second, that the consulting team are willing to act as agents of a masculine government (as represented by Mycroft) to engage in criminal behavior against the female body, even when Sherlock himself admits that Adler is best left alone.

Viewing Adler’s use of violence as a defense against rape and violation sheds new light on her deviation from Conan Doyle’s original character. While this shift is problematic, as identified by the aforementioned critical discussions, as the second part of my argument I posit that Adler’s use of violence is a necessity because it challenges the heterosexual man’s monopoly on violence, especially considering how often both Sherlock and John *resort* to violence.⁸² By combining sexuality and violence, Irene Adler breaks down these traditionally masculine and feminine binaries. For example, when Sherlock’s boredom overpowers him, he

⁸² This emphasis on violence is part of a larger narrative in *Sherlock* that venerates violation, explored by Zea Miller in her book chapter, “The Veneration of Violation in *Sherlock*” (pp. 208-222) in Nadine Farghaly’s *Gender and the Modern Sherlock Holmes* (McFarland, 2015).

riddles Mrs. Hudson's wall with bullet holes in "The Great Game" (S1E3), and John flies into a violent rage and tries to strangle Sherlock when he comes back from the "dead" on the night John proposes to Mary (S3E1). So, Adler's use of violence against Sherlock and John is, in fact, a strategy of confronting the patriarchy by turning its monopoly on violence onto itself. As a result, Adler bests Sherlock. When Sherlock steals the camera-phone at Belgravia, Adler quickly disarms Sherlock with a needle to the shoulder and proceeds to whack him with her riding crop until Sherlock drops her camera-phone. Perhaps most significantly, Adler's use of violence creates a union between exciting female sexuality and brutal masculine violence to buck all social norms and force the viewer to reevaluate his/her idea of "woman." And there is another facet of Miss Adler's character that critics seem to disregard: Adler solves Sherlock and John's current case involving a dead hiker. After drugging Sherlock, Adler tells him that the hiker died as a result of a boomerang to the head. She also earns Sherlock's admiration when she fails to fall for his camera-phone swap; Sherlock says, "Oh, you're rather good" (S2E1). High praise from the consulting detective. Thus, Adler's violent behavior leads back to the Victorian *femme fatale*'s attempt to blur the lines between "moral" and "immoral" women. Why should audiences consider Adler immoral? Because she is a dominatrix, or because she keeps blackmail files on her clients for insurance? Or, perhaps, is it because she is in league with Jim Moriarty?

This last question raises another, more critical one: what about Adler's connection to Moriarty? It clearly places the dominatrix in a criminal environment, another significant deviation from the Conan Doyle character. This connection, revealed when Adler texts Moriarty the time and place of a mysterious flight plan identified as "Bond Air," does, in a sense, justify Sherlock and John's intervention and attempted theft of the camera-phone. However, viewers could construe this view as patriarchal prejudice when considered in light of society's gendered

constructions of self-interest; as Christina Hughes points out, “women who assert their self-interest risk transgressing norms of femininity” (94). Adler’s reliance on Jim Moriarty to play the Holmes brothers belies her need for protection, a form of self-interest given her chosen profession and the secrets on her camera-phone. The viewer, then, must consider whether or not Adler’s self-interest is any different from that of Sherlock’s selfishness, which causes him to flout rules and regulations for his own agenda, hurting sometimes John or other innocent bystanders.

While my arguments above work to refute academic criticism concerning Pulver’s Irene Adler as a proto-feminist, Moffat and Gatiss do fail Adler in one significant plot point: while Irene Adler admits to John that she is gay in “A Scandal in Belgravia,” by the end of the episode she has fallen in love with Sherlock. This love causes Adler’s downfall, and Sherlock deduces that the code on her camera-phone reads “I AM SHERLOCKED.” When Irene Adler falls in love with Sherlock, she loses some of her cultural significance: her homosexuality is now merely a performance without any true substance; by contrast, true performativities that work against gender and sexual binaries, as identified by Judith Butler, are “bodily and speech acts” (198). While one could argue that Adler’s sexual attraction towards Sherlock indicates an adaptable sexual appetite that engages with fluidity in sexuality, I argue that what viewers see with Irene Adler here is mere lip service. I take this stance with Terry Castle’s argument about the “apparitional lesbian” in mind. Castle argues that the lesbian is a spectral, apparitional figure in modern literature and that “Western civilization has for centuries been haunted by a fear of ‘women without men’ – of women indifferent or resistant to male desire” (5). This fear pushes the lesbian into an invisible but ever-present role in literature that exists “in the very fabric of cultural life” (Castle 17). Irene Adler’s admittance of lesbianism and subsequent heterosexual

love for Sherlock a mere 30 minutes later in “A Scandal in Belgravia” pushes lesbianism to this apparitional status.

Adler’s heterosexual love for Sherlock negates her potential ability to reconstitute the heterosexual norm by embracing homosexuality. As Butler underscores, norms can and do shift because they do not always exercise final control (15). This flaw, I argue, is Moffat and Gatiss’ greatest mistake with their Irene Adler adaptation. Aside from this gap in Lara Pulver’s portrayal of Irene Adler, Pulver crafts “the woman” as a *femme fatale* with a violent streak to rival any male contemporary.

CBS Elementary’s Irene Adler

Elementary writers made the bold choice to combine the characters of Irene Adler and Professor Moriarty into one female criminal mastermind, played by Natalie Dormer. I end my Irene Adler analysis with Dormer’s character because this Irene adaptation completely disregards Victorian ideas of female domesticity by uniting the unmatched Sherlock Holmes villain with the incomparable Sherlock Holmes “New Woman.” In sum, the New Woman reaches her apex here, and Natalie Dormer’s character is admirable, shrewd, and devious. Dormer’s character addresses Butler’s understanding of sexual difference as “the site where a question concerning the relation of the biological to the cultural is posed and reposed, where it must and can be posed, but where it cannot, strictly speaking, be



Figure 2.7. Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler in Mr. Stapleton’s mansion; S1 E23/24, “The Woman”/“The Heroine”; <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2191671/mediaviewer/rm277047>

answered” (186). By combining the criminal mastermind with the New Woman, *Elementary* challenges gender stereotypes that still pervade twenty-first-century society.

Irene Adler makes her first appearance at the very end of S1E22, “Risk Management”: following a series of clues left by the elusive criminal mastermind known only as “Moriarty,” Sherlock and Watson find themselves entering a beautiful and haunting white mansion. Inside is Irene Adler (see fig. 2.7), ostensibly held captive by a man she can only identify as Mr. Stapleton and whom Sherlock and Watson connect to Moriarty. Natalie Dormer’s character is beautiful and feminine, as also indicated in fig. 2.7. The viewer knows her significance to Sherlock at this point because he explained Irene to Watson at the beginning of this episode: “She was, to me, the woman. She eclipsed and predominated the whole of her gender. She was the only one I ever loved.” *Elementary* writers spend a large portion of S1E23, “The Woman,” utilizing flashbacks to Irene and Sherlock’s time together to emphasize just how enthralled Sherlock was with Irene. Sherlock comes to Irene, an American art restorer living in London, to consult on a case. Witty banter between the two informs the audience that Irene is not only an art restorer but also a forger and a thief; these traits are complemented by her bold sexual advances towards Sherlock. For example, Irene’s sensual confidence comes out when Sherlock first enters her loft: “I’ve already told you that you’re beautiful, and I can see the way you’re looking at me. Why would we need to leave this apartment to enjoy each other’s company?” In short, Irene is the ideal match for CBS’s sexualized⁸³ Sherlock: smart, witty, sexual, and a perfect balance between law-abiding compliancy and illicit activity (as it turns out, several of the paintings dotting her

⁸³ CBS’s interpretation of Sherlock Holmes is a significant deviation from any previous mainstream television series or movie production. Jonny Lee Miller’s character needs constant sexual gratification. This twenty-first-century Sherlock Holmes is quite different than previous adaptations, and specifically British interpretations. (Note: while Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* franchise implies that Sherlock Holmes [Robert Downey Jr.] and Irene Adler [Rachel McAdams] had a sexual relationship, there is no sexual intercourse in the movies.)

apartment walls are originals stolen from museums).

Sherlock's obvious infatuation with Irene blinds the detective to any warning signs regarding Irene's sudden reappearance. He tells Watson that he will not help Detective Bell with Irene's case because Sherlock needs to look after her; and refuses to leave Irene's side, even sleeping on the couch to be on call when Irene's post-traumatic stress nightmares wake her up. Sherlock's vigilance reaches its apex when he and Irene return to the brownstone after visiting a possible suspect. Irene enters her bedroom to discover a message from Mr. Stapleton: a white flower, which he used to leave on her bed at the mansion. This threat propels Sherlock to desperation, and he takes Irene to his personal safehouse. He wants to send her away, but she insists that she will not leave without Sherlock. However, Irene makes a mistake: she has had a birthmark on her back surgically removed, and Sherlock, the consummate observer, notices this difference. (In a flashback scene during this episode, Sherlock and Irene are in bed in London and he traces those birthmarks on her back, noting that they form a constellation. The removed birthmark changes the constellation and Sherlock notices this difference.) He confronts her and accuses her of working for Moriarty; Irene's furious denials result in Sherlock's abrupt departure back to the brownstone (S1E23).

When Sherlock returns to the brownstone, one of Moriarty's assassins ambushes him. At this point Irene makes her appearance in her true form. *Jamie* Moriarty emerges from the dark after firing a series of shots into the assassin's chest, her gaze and hands steady on the dead man in front of her. Irene is transformed: her hair perfectly coifed, she's wearing a tailored bomber jacket, tight leather pants, heels (see fig. 2.8), and, perhaps most dramatic of all, her accent has changed from American to *British*.⁸⁴ This shift from Irene Adler/American to Jamie

⁸⁴ This shift from American to British also denotes a shift away from Conan Doyle's original character, who was an American living in London. While this detail is minor and overshadowed by the more significant shift from Adler to

Moriarty/British is significant because the transformation in both name and nationality metaphorically transgresses the literal boundary of an ocean. Her identity is physically embodying Anzaldúa's concept of the flexibility Moriarty's revelation heightens her larger gender transgression: her role as criminal mastermind.

In this same scene, Moriarty (a name I will use when referring to Irene Adler as her "true" self) explains to Sherlock why the use of male voices and intermediaries were a necessity when making contact with him and her criminal business partners: "A potential client might struggle with my gender. As if men have a monopoly on murder." This statement underscores

the gender bias Anglo-Western culture exhibits towards male villains, and circles back to Watson and Sherlock's conversations when first hunting Moriarty.

While Sherlock and Watson always assume that Moriarty speaks to them through an intermediary, both never doubt that they



Figure 2.8. Moriarty standing over the assassin's dead body; S1 E23/24, "The Woman"; <https://allthatcubeness.wordpress.com/2013/05/26/elementary-season-one-finale-games-versus-puzzles-and-a-mascot/>

are dealing with a *man*. Sherlock notes at the beginning of "Risk Management" (S1E22): "Even if he is a mere minion, identifying the minion will get me one step closer to identifying the *man himself*" (emphasis mine). Sherlock and Watson are both guilty of *gendering* evil, a mistake that severely damages their ability to see through Moriarty's disguise; while this gendering from both detectives is troubling, Sherlock's specific inability to see past gender underscores contemporary prejudices against female villains. Before Moriarty's reveal, Sherlock tells Watson that he needs to admit defeat, because "Moriarty is quite clearly smarter...A man should know when he's

Moriarty, this shift in nationality nevertheless belies another connection between Natalie Dormer's character and Conan Doyle's original New Woman.

beaten.” As with Conan Doyle’s original character, this Sherlock does not believe a woman can outmatch him. Moriarty’s status as a feminist character, therefore, mirrors that of Abbington’s Mary Watson: by successfully engaging in traditionally-masculine violence, Dormer’s character breaks gender’s need to equate “masculine” with “male” and “feminine” with “female” (Butler 10). This gender mechanism is no longer a viable option.

When Moriarty explains why she used a man to communicate with Sherlock and Watson, she says that it was in part to protect her identity but often also because of her gender: “Other times, it was because I suspected a potential client might...struggle...with my gender. As if men had a monopoly on murder.” This comment brings gender to the reader’s attention and emphasizes the significance of gender (and explicitly prejudice against a specific gender) in the international sphere. As an international criminal mastermind, Moriarty is also an entrepreneur because her criminal enterprises yield her wealth and notoriety. Feminist and academic Christina Hughes notes in her work *Feminist Theory and Research* that “there remain considerable disparities in the income levels of women and men despite...equal pay legislation. Few women actually do run global corporations or nations” (42). Hughes’ point is that despite “progressive” moves towards equalizing employment, women still lag behind men. So, in this context, Moriarty represents not only a female villain who must utilize violence to dominate a patriarchal environment, but also a successful, global entrepreneur, whose current project is to take down the newly formed Republic of New Macedonia and acquire a billion-denar⁸⁵ payout (S1E23/24). As an entrepreneurial female villain, Moriarty responds to Hughes’s criticisms concerning female power on a global scale. Moriarty’s skill as an international criminal mastermind is significant because Irene Adler/Jamie Moriarty is also *heteronormative* and she does not

⁸⁵ “Denar” is the identified currency of the Republic of New Macedonia.

challenge gender binaries with her sexuality. The sexual tensions and history between Irene and Sherlock solidify heteronormativity in gender relations, particularly among the main characters⁸⁶ in *Elementary*. Therefore, rather than addressing a fluidity in sexuality, Jamie Moriarty's status as a powerful and successful criminal mastermind serves to subvert traditional gendered ideas of villainy and professionalism.

And yet, Moriarty's status as a criminal mastermind is a complication for her engagement with feminism. On the one hand, Moriarty's villainy and confidence with violence work against traditional ideas of femininity and call into question which gender monopolizes violence. In this respect, *Elementary*'s Jamie Moriarty and *Sherlock*'s Mary Watson exhibit significant similarities. Both challenge traditional, gendered ideas of femininity through their effective use of violence (and specifically murder). Additionally, both utilize deception and disguise to *hide* that ability from the significant male figures in their lives. On the other hand, this violence acts as a containment tool: Moriarty is a villain, and she ends up in prison and separated physically from Sherlock. Therefore, Jamie Moriarty's feminism links itself to punishment, which could give⁸⁷ viewers a negative impression or interpretation of strong female characters.

As a final note, Jamie Moriarty reappears in "The Diabolical Kind"⁸⁸ (S2E12). While investigating the kidnapping of a child named Kayden Fuller, Sherlock and Watson find themselves forced into a partnership with Moriarty. This union is necessary because the kidnapper's voice on the ransom calls is Jamie Moriarty's lieutenant from the previous season.

⁸⁶ *Elementary* writers definitively identify Sherlock and Watson as heteronormative and heterosexual.

⁸⁷ I emphasize "could give" because Joan Watson is a strong female character, who, unlike Jamie Moriarty, is a protagonist.

⁸⁸ Of note is the title of this episode: the phrase "diabolical kind" refers to Sherlock Holmes's description of Professor Moriarty in "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (1893). Holmes tells Watson, "But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind" (Conan Doyle 440). Jamie Moriarty's cunning in both this episode and the last two episodes of Season 1 emphasize her "diabolical" nature, and specifically her ability to manipulate Sherlock and Watson.

As Sherlock and Watson soon discover, “Faux-riarty” has gone rogue, and Moriarty’s true purpose in cooperating in the NYPD’s investigation is to find her lieutenant’s location and murder him. His death is not retribution, but because Moriarty is Kayden Fuller’s real mother. In the end, Jamie Moriarty succeeds in rescuing her daughter, and does so by slitting her wrists to escape both her shackles and prison guards. When Sherlock finds her, Moriarty is near death, and tells him, “Even as I carried her to term, I knew that motherhood would not mix well with my proclivities,” and so she chose the Fullers as a surrogate family. This sentence is a synthesis of Moriarty’s essence: she yearns for motherhood enough to carry out the birth and loves the child enough to send Kayden away to live a life free from her criminal mother. Moriarty is also willing to play the role of sacrificial mother, as she would have most certainly bled out if Sherlock had not been clever enough to find her (this sacrifice also harkens back to the Victorian notions of motherhood as a supreme duty). This backstory underscores Christina Hughes’ point that care holds a complicated position in feminist theory: “it is both posited as a hallmark of woman’s difference and it is viewed as an entrapment of subservience from which woman must escape” (108). This character development again connects Natalie Dormer’s Jamie Moriarty with Abigail Abbington’s Mary Watson: both women are hardened, ruthless assassins *and* sacrificial mothers. Both, in other words, work to defy the expectations associated with stereotypes of “female” and retaliate with ruthlessness. And, in the end, both are separated from their daughters.

However, unlike Abbington’s character, Jamie Moriarty does not die, and Moriarty’s ability to both escape prison and murder her wayward lieutenant emphasizes that Sherlock and Watson have not completely succeeded in marginalizing/removing this criminal mastermind, who successfully embodies the dual identities of traditionally-feminine motherhood and traditionally-masculine economic power. This caveat is perhaps succinctly explained when taken

into consideration with the CBS network's history. CBS has an established commitment to crime dramas. This list includes *Kojak* (1973-78), *Magnum P.I.* (1980-88), *Cagney & Lacey* (1982-88), *Murder, She Wrote* (1984-96), *The Mentalist* (2008-13), *CSI: NY* (2004-15) (to just name one of the many *CSI* spin-offs), and the remake of *Hawaii Five-O* (2010-2018). The character Jamie Moriarty indicates that CBS's commitment to the detective genre is taking a more radical turn because utilizing a strong, provocative female villain pushes back at the tried-and-true detective show plotline. After all, Sherlock and Watson never really 'defeat' Irene. She may be marginalized, but her reappearance in "The Diabolical Kind" emphasizes that the detective team was not completely successful in taking down Sherlock's nemesis. Instead, Moriarty lives, and Sherlock writes letters to her. Sherlock's willingness to maintain contact with Moriarty is almost a point of irony: the man is acquiescing to a female villain's request to communicate.⁸⁹ This relationship underscores Moriarty's continued power over Sherlock and calls on audiences to question who maintains the power in this relationship. Therefore, this relationship yet again symbolizes a pushback against traditional constructions of gender roles.

Conan Doyle's Irene Adler, as explored in my first chapter, is an empowered and independent New Woman character. These twenty-first-century Irene Adler adaptations try to embody that same New Woman spirit and call attention to Ann Ardis's question about the Victorian New Woman: "what happens to the New Woman herself as she ventures out into the public world?" (21). Ardis' *New Women, New Novels* explores the Victorian New Woman and

⁸⁹This relationship is not wholly new to CBS. In *CSI: (2000-2015)*, Gil Grissom (the lead investigator for seasons 1-8) becomes emotionally attached to a dominatrix, Lady Heather. Lady Heather first crosses the CSI team when her fetish club is the site of a murder. However, she is not involved and is not specifically a criminal until 2006, five years after her first appearance: Lady Heather's daughter has been murdered and she abducts the killer. Grissom stops her just in time and they afterwards form a casual but deep relationship that is often assumed sexual. As with Moriarty and Sherlock, Lady Heather and Grissom transgress the boundary between detective and criminal to create an affective relationship. However, unlike Moriarty, Lady Heather does not devolve into permanent criminality and instead rises above her attempted abduction to become a registered sex therapist.

how this literary figure “refuse[s] to be discrete” and challenges the reader “to reflect on the history of feminist criticism” to “interrogate our own omissions and exclusions,” particularly in regard to women’s sexuality (Ardis 4, 8-9). In the Victorian Era, woman’s behavior needed to be “codified within the marital system of the bourgeois social order” (Ardis 93). These novels, in short, supported woman’s “‘monstrous’ ambitions to be something – anything – besides wives and mothers” (Ardis 134). However, this support often led to tragic endings: the New Woman often became a spinster, married against her will, or was “imprisoned by sexual desire” and died (Ardis 109). Therefore, to answer Ardis’ question, the Victorian New Woman rarely experienced success when venturing into the public world. Unfortunately, these Alders remain in this misfortunate stasis and beg the question as to how far Anglo-American society has advanced in women’s rights since the late nineteenth century.

While these Irene Adler adaptations are significant in terms of their portrayal of women, these adaptations also explore the possibility of a sexual relationship between Sherlock Holmes and “the woman.” In other words, the “lack of romantic involvement between the canonical Adler and Holmes has been repeatedly ignored in non-canonical presentations” (“Return of ‘the woman’” 42). Specifically, each Irene Adler character is *always* sexually attracted to the Sherlock Holmes character. It would seem that contemporary adaptations cannot let go of this need to create a sexual relationship between the consulting detective and his most admired rival. While outside the scope of this chapter, Irene Adler’s sexual priorities towards Sherlock Holmes in adaptation merit further academic attention. Here, it is sufficient to say that sexual tensions between a male Holmes and a female Adler play into Anglo-American society’s comfort with heterosexuality. It is not until Moffat and Gatiss recreate Professor Moriarty that these adaptations engage in an extensive overhaul of heterosexual tensions. With Jim Moriarty, Moffat

and Gatiss take gender fluidity to a more provocative level by disrupting and overturning gender conventions almost relentlessly across *Sherlock's* second season.

Professor/Jim Moriarty: The Gender-Bending Consulting Criminal

Professor Moriarty's enduring popularity in both the Sherlock Holmes canon and popular adaptations does not lie in Moriarty's rich character development or frequency in the canon itself, but on the fact that Conan Doyle identifies the professor as Holmes's only intellectual rival and the ostensible cause of the detective's death at the end of "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (1893). Conan Doyle indicates Professor Moriarty's significance in Holmes's heavy-handed commentary on the professor in "Final Problem":

He is a man of good birth and excellent education, endowed by nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty...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 indefinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers. (440)

Professor Moriarty himself states that his and Holmes's rivalry will lead to "inevitable destruction" and that the detective will be "trodden under foot" (Conan Doyle 442). Moriarty's fateful prediction does not disappoint: Holmes and Watson chase Moriarty across Europe until all three reach Meiringen and the waterfalls at Reichenbach, where Holmes and Moriarty ostensibly fall to their deaths. In his final letter to Watson, Sherlock Holmes writes, "I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear it is at a cost which will give pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you" (Conan Doyle 449). With this emotional plea, Sherlock vanishes from British periodicals (at least, for a short time).

And yet, despite this dramatic ending, Professor Moriarty only merits brief mentions in subsequent stories such as "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client" (1924) and *The Valley of*

Fear (1914-15). As Benedict Turner so accurately states, Professor Moriarty's legacy is an inelegant one, and unsupported by textual evidence; this nemesis is a "hastily prepared device to kill off Holmes and bring an end to the series" (23). Conan Doyle was so desperate to kill off a character he personally loathed that he carried out his task in the most dramatic but unsophisticated method possible. However, the Professor's legacy in adaptation takes on a deeper significance.

BBC *Sherlock*'s Jim Moriarty. Gatiss and Moffat's crowning glory is arguably Jim Moriarty. While *Sherlock* creators take considerable effort to produce a well-documented and comical homosocial-borderline-homosexual relationship between Sherlock and John, I argue that the Moriarty-Sherlock relationship is a greater challenge to gender norms and the cultural taboo on open homosexuality because Moffat and Gatiss invest Jim Moriarty with a sexual fluidity that enables him to defamiliarize and denaturalize sexuality through performance of speech and bodily acts per Judith Butler (198). In other words, Jim Moriarty creates moments in which I interpret this malleability as an embodiment of the principle of queer theory, as identified by Max H. Kirsch: "The *principle* of 'queer,' then, is the disassembling of common beliefs about gender and sexuality, from their representation in film, literature, and music to their placement in the social and physical sciences" (33). By confronting social and cultural binaries that mold gender and sexuality, Jim Moriarty challenges audiences to see that binaries are fragile and easily transgressed.

As a television character, Jim Moriarty's physicality is particularly significant. His actions and behaviors emphasize Kirsch's argument that "sex and gender are most illustrative when backed by observable behavior" (49). Jim Moriarty makes his first *physical* appearance in *Sherlock* as Molly Hooper's boyfriend in S1E3, "The Great Game." Introduced as 'Jim' to

Sherlock and John, he's a desperate attempt on Molly's part to make Sherlock jealous. Sherlock is unimpressed, and he informs Molly that her boyfriend is gay: "With that level of personal



Figure 2.9. Jim Moriarty wearing his Vivienne Westwood suit; S1E3, "The Great Game"; personal screen shot

grooming? [...] Plus, the suggestive fact that he just left his number under this dish here." While brief, the scene establishes two significant patterns: the first is Moriarty's ability to manipulate binaries that work to differentiate masculinity and femininity, and also heterosexuality and homosexuality. The second is Moriarty's sexually aggressive come-ons to Sherlock (not "with" Sherlock, as the consulting detective does not seem to return the affection to

any large degree). Both are noteworthy deviations from the Sherlock Holmes canon, and indicate that Moffat and Gatiss are manipulating this character to explore twenty-first-century conversations regarding gender and sexuality. This first impression is further significant because Moriarty disrupts Anglo-American culture's historical use of visible markers to categorize an individual as either homosexual or heterosexual. As the third season progresses, Moriarty continues to defy such historical classifications of sexual identity and instead works to denaturalize traditional visual markers of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

Moriarty plays with these heterosexual and homosexual stereotypes and confounds viewers' attempts at categorization almost shot-by-shot. Aside from his "Gay Jim" character, Moriarty plays with auditory stereotypes traditionally held towards homosexual men in "The Great Game" with his voice fluctuations. When confronting Sherlock and John at the pool house,

Moriarty's voice changes registers from low to high when he exclaims, "Sorry, boys! I'm soooo changeable!" This shift from low to high undercuts Moriarty's male gender (indicated by his tailored Westwood suit and impeccably groomed hair, as seen in fig. 2.9) and implies femininity or a stereotyped "gay" character in a television show or movie. Moriarty again subverts gender classification when he breaks into the Tower of London and awaits Scotland Yard bedecked in Queen Elizabeth II's crown jewels in "The Reichenbach Fall" (S2E3) (as seen in fig. 2.10). Here,



Figure 2.10. Jim Moriarty wearing the Queen's jewels; S2E3, "The Reichenbach Fall"; personal screen shot

viewers can see the implication that Moriarty is cross-dressing, as the jewels are accoutrements of Queen Elizabeth II, who has sat on the throne since her coronation on 2 June 1953. These acts of "play": playing gay, playing with voice, and playing with the Queen's

jewels, are acts of performativity that transgress social and gender boundaries and emphasize that gender is a social construction that can (and will) break down when subjected to experimental play. Moreover, Moriarty plays all these varying roles without offering the viewer any definitive identity. This performativity is key: by "performing" as Molly's straight-but-actually-gay boyfriend and "crossdressing" as the Queen of England, Moriarty demonstrates that heterosexual norms are *performances* because he shifts between each role.

Perhaps the most significant act of "play" for Moriarty is his obsessive "puppy love" for Sherlock that challenges Sherlock's asexuality and confuses audiences' perceptions of Moriarty's own sexual orientation. The playful, yet violent, wordplay between consulting detective and consulting criminal is fraught with sexual tension. A telling example comes from

“The Great Game.” In this episode, Moriarty kidnaps innocent citizens who feed Sherlock a series of clues relating to unsolved crimes. Sherlock must solve those crimes before a set amount of time runs out, or else Moriarty will kill the captive. Moriarty also uses his kidnapped victims to talk to Sherlock as himself (not “Gay Jim”). These interactions set the tone for their entire relationship. Moriarty calls Sherlock, opening with the line “Hey, sexy.” This implied sexual come-on from Moriarty reaches Sherlock through the consulting criminal’s first victim. She has a bomb strapped to her chest and cries hysterically while repeating Moriarty’s words, which he feeds to her through a series of text messages.⁹⁰ This pairing of a sexual, intimate greeting with shocking violence is jarring to viewers and effectively exemplifies how the Moriarty-Sherlock relationship will proceed for the duration of the episode. Until the end of “Game,” Moriarty and Sherlock’s contact happens solely through these coerced individuals, and Moriarty’s chosen words are fraught with sexual tension:

Twelve hours to solve the puzzle, Sherlock, or I’m going to be so naughty.
We were made for each other, Sherlock.
I like to watch you dance.⁹¹

This sexual tension continues between detective and criminal until Moriarty finally reveals himself to Sherlock in the last scene. Moriarty appears as himself, sans any hostages or middlemen. Moriarty’s opening lines are both sinister and sexual: “I gave you my number. I thought you might call me. Is that a British Army Browning L9A1 in your pocket, or are you just pleased to see me?” Moreover, Moriarty makes this sexually-charged comment while holding John hostage. John is Moriarty’s final victim, and he stands in between detective and criminal

⁹⁰ Notably, Natalie Dormer’s Jamie Moriarty used voices to disguise herself while addressing Sherlock and Watson in the first season of *Elementary*. These two characters’ reliance on gender confusion to subvert the Sherlock Holmes character further works to confuse and subvert traditional markers of gender (a female voice means a woman; a masculine voice means a man).

⁹¹ These lines are all spoken at separate times throughout the episode. I have condensed them here to give a better understanding of their weight and for easier reference.

wearing a jacket laced with explosives. So, not only is Moriarty engaging in sexual repartee with Sherlock, but the consulting criminal is doing so while holding Sherlock's homosocial housemate captive, again interweaving sex and violence.

"The Great Game" establishes Moriarty's significance to the BBC series. This episode also raises questions for the viewer concerning Moriarty's obsession with Sherlock: is Moriarty homosexual? Is he heterosexual? Is he in love with Sherlock? Or, is he asexual (or perhaps sexually uninterested), and just inflicting a sadistic game onto his arch rival? Moffat and Gatiss decline to provide any definitive answers in *Sherlock*. Andrew Scott himself says in the episode, "Sherlock Uncovered: The Villains,"⁹² "In a way, Sherlock and Moriarty love each other, or they are certainly obsessed with each other." Scott describes Moriarty and Sherlock's encounter by the pool as "slightly flirtatious." (Scott specifically cites the infamous "Browning L9A1" line to support his characterization.) These comments imply that the Sherlock-Moriarty relationship is volatile and emotional; however, Scott's answer is not a definitive "yes" to homosexuality: neither "slightly flirtatious" nor "obsessed" equate sexual attraction, but nor do they clear either (or both) characters *of* that attraction.

Moffat and Gatiss are significantly less open to providing audiences with firm answers regarding Moriarty's relationship with Sherlock. In an interview with *The Guardian*,⁹³ Moffat and Gatiss first insist that Sherlock's relationship with Irene Adler is a "non-love story"; Martin Freeman then adds the comment, "John thinks it would be much healthier that Sherlock did have a relationship with a human being, as opposed to with a book or a theory or something...It's just that Holmes happens to be falling in love with someone who is as insane as he is!" (Mumford). Freeman is referring to Jim Moriarty as the "someone insane." I argue that this ambivalence in

⁹² This episode is one of several supplemental behind-the-scenes episodes available on Netflix.

⁹³ This interview included Steven Moffat, Mark Gatiss, Benedict Cumberbatch, and Martin Freeman

defining Sherlock and Moriarty's relationship exemplifies Sedgwick's argument that simply *trying* to place a sexual orientation in a specific category is a slippery slope, as "sexuality" can imply anything from object choice (i.e. singular/plural) to physical preference (i.e. orgasmic/nonorgasmic) ("Axiomatic" 87). Attempts to place Moriarty in a normative context do not yield a specific category. Therefore, Moriarty defies categorization and instead creates chaos because he simply declines to provide the viewers with a clear narrative as to his intentions or psychology. Moriarty's ability to create gender and sexual chaos coalesces with Morland and Wilcox's argument that queer theory disrupts traditional identity concepts. Moriarty *performs* different gender identities to break down their stereotypes and binaries (Morland and Wilcox 4) and subvert audience expectations. Therefore, the Sherlock-Moriarty relationship pulls the audience along Sedgwick's heterosexual-homosexual continuum by subverting gender expectations and declining definitive answers.

Two further complications exist to the Sherlock-Moriarty relationship: Moriarty's use of violence towards Sherlock and Sherlock's hypothetical sexual attraction to Moriarty. As previously mentioned, Moriarty always tempers his flirtations with Sherlock with extreme violence. I pose that this violence is a form of sexual harassment. A telling example comes from Moriarty's visit to 221B Baker Street after his "not guilty" verdict.⁹⁴ Over tea, in a domestic context akin to Sherlock and John sitting around the fire together, Moriarty and Sherlock engage in a witty repartee that mirrors conversations between Sherlock and John, but with a more sinister undertone:

Sherlock: So how are you going to do it? Burn me?

Moriarty: Oh, that's the problem. The final problem. Have you worked out what it is yet? What's the final problem? I did tell you. [Sing-song voice] But did you listen?

⁹⁴ After breaking into the Tower of London, Moriarty allows Scotland Yard to arrest him. He is put on trial, but blackmails the jury members, which leads to a "not guilty" verdict. Upon his release, Moriarty goes to 221B Baker Street. Sherlock anticipates this arrival and has tea waiting for the consulting criminal.

[Moriarty taps his fingers against his knee]
Moriarty: How hard do you find it having to say “I don’t know”?
Sherlock: I don’t know.
Moriarty: Oh, that’s clever. That’s very clever. Awfully clever.

Sherlock and Moriarty are mimicking the homosocial setting,⁹⁵ but Moriarty’s teasing is more aggressive and condescending than any of John’s frustrated comments. Later in this same conversation, Sherlock tells Moriarty that he knows Moriarty’s masterplan, and Moriarty responds that the plan will make him a king, “And honey, you should see me in a crown.” By referring to Sherlock as “honey,” Moriarty’s tone is a sexualized term of endearment. In a colloquial context, viewers can interpret “honey” as a pet name commonly used to refer to someone more naïve or less intelligent. Additionally, when Moriarty exits 221B Baker Street, he leaves behind a red apple with “I O U” carved in it. I interpret this token on two levels: first, an apple can reference the biblical story of Adam and Eve and therefore represent temptation or sin. Moriarty is tempting Sherlock to “sin” and give into his desire to chase after the consulting criminal. Second, the carved letters themselves emphasize Moriarty’s plan to destroy Sherlock per his comment that he owes Sherlock a “fall.” Combined, these contexts place Moriarty in the role of sexual harasser.

Moriarty’s sexual harassment does not end after his climactic suicide atop St. Bart’s hospital.⁹⁶ For example, in “His Last Bow” (S3E3), Sherlock enters his mind palace⁹⁷ and the audience finds Moriarty bound in a straitjacket, stuck in a padded prison (see fig. 2.11). This scene is rife with sexual tensions. First, the bondage makes a connection to BD/SM culture and

⁹⁵ Please refer back to my second chapter concerning John and Sherlock’s homosocial relationship and its verbal cues.

⁹⁶ A brief reminder: Moriarty stages his suicide atop St. Bart’s at the end of “The Reichenbach Fall.”

⁹⁷ Sherlock and John are up against Charles Augustus Magnussen in this episode, and Sherlock must search what he calls his “mind palace” for information pertaining to the case. The mind palace is how Sherlock envisions his memories: he stores them in an imaginary palace that he can visit when necessary to dig up information he has stored in his brain. At this specific point in time, Sherlock enters his mind palace to understand how he must react to avoid bleeding out after Mary shoots him.

second, it implies that Sherlock and Moriarty have not yet resolved their relationship. However, in this scenario, Sherlock is now the dominant rather than the submissive (after all, in his previous engagements with Moriarty, the criminal is always the one taking on the dominant role and harassing the detective) in this quasi-homosexual relationship, inflicting the violence rather than receiving it. Moriarty's presence also asks the audience about *Sherlock's* feelings towards the consulting criminal. Viewers can interpret this scene as evidence of Sherlock's inability to confront or process possible sexual feelings for Moriarty, thereby explaining the BD/SM



Figure 2.11. Jim Moriarty trapped in Sherlock's mind palace; S3E3, "His Last Bow"; personal screen shot

component. The implied sexual tensions here also align with Kirsch's analysis of queer theory. Kirsch argues for a definition of "queer" as "the 'queering' of culture, ranging from the reinterpretation of characters in novels and cinema to the deconstruction of historical analyses"

(33). In other words, Kirsch encourages his readers to engage in the activity of queering fictional characters to deconstruct traditional narratives. With this definition in mind, this scene from "Bow" can be read as a queering of the Sherlock Holmes canon: by creating room for viewers to interpret Sherlock Holmes and Jim Moriarty as potential homosexual men, Moffat and Gatiss are deconstructing traditional literary analyses of the Sherlock Holmes character that rely on Holmes's asexuality.⁹⁸

Specifically, this emphasis on male-to-male sexual harassment works to break down misconceptions about this type of harassment. Moriarty performs the same type of harassment

⁹⁸ Sherlock Holmes is historically viewed as an asexual character, per Dr. Watson's comments in "A Scandal in Bohemia" that the detective finds all emotions abhorrent.

that Sherlock and John perpetrate on Irene Adler⁹⁹ and yet, Moriarty's harassment is more taboo because it contains *homosexual* overtones and innuendos and underscores how Anglo-American society has normalized male-female harassment but not male-male harassment. The contrasting fates of Irene Adler and Jim Moriarty further underscore this distinction between male-female harassment and male-male harassment: Adler ultimately escapes London with her life, while Moriarty commits suicide at the top of St. Bart's Hospital. The most culturally-appropriate sexual harassment (Irene Adler) has a satisfactory ending (Sherlock saves Irene from execution) while the more transgressive form of harassment (Moriarty's attacks on Sherlock) leads to death.

Overall, Moriarty's sexual harassment towards Sherlock gives the Sherlock-Moriarty relationship a significantly distinctive and different tone than that of the Sherlock-John relationship. A man who *could* be gay replaces John, the steadfast heterosexual who



Figure 2.12. Jim Moriarty and Sherlock Holmes leaning in for a kiss; S3E1, "The Empty Hearse"; personal screenshot

emphatically (and repeatedly) declares he is *not* gay. This shift blurs Sherlock's and Moriarty's sexualities. As I previously discussed, neither Moffat nor Gatiss definitively offer a sexual category for Moriarty. They furthermore decline to do the same

for Sherlock. In *Sherlock*'s first episode, John prods Sherlock regarding the detective's sexuality in an Italian café while they await movement on a potential suspect in a string of apparent suicides. John awkwardly assures his brand-new flatmate that being gay is "okay"; Sherlock

⁹⁹ Sherlock and John violate Irene Adler by using false identities to enter her Belgravia residence and subsequently work to control and tame her body.

thinks that John is trying to hit on him and replies, “John...I think you should know that I consider myself married to my work, and while I’m flattered, I’m really not looking for any...” (at which point Sherlock’s sentence trails off into silence and John responds with an emphatic “No, I’m not asking”) (S1E1). And, while Sherlock begins a sexual relationship with Mary’s friend Janine in the third season, the audience learns that Sherlock’s purpose in sleeping with Janine (and even proposing marriage to her) is to gain access to Augustus Magnussen’s offices, not because he feels anything akin to emotional love for the young woman (S3E3).¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Moriarty’s trial serves to blur Sherlock’s sexuality. At one point during the trial, Sherlock takes the stand to give his expert testimony. He admits that he is drawn to Moriarty: even though they had only met for about 10 minutes total (referencing their lab and pool house scenes from “Great Game”), the detective confesses, “[I] felt we had a special something.” As with the BD/SM scene from “His Last Bow,” this comment queers the Sherlock Holmes character specifically through his potential relationship with Moriarty, thereby deconstructing Conan Doyle’s detective and the detective’s traditional role. These two posit the possibility of a homosexual Sherlock Holmes, and Moffat and Gatiss present one instance where such a sexual orientation is possible.

In “The Empty Hearse” (S3E1), Anderson, a crime technician for Inspector Lestrade and one of Sherlock’s most antagonistic critics, completely changes his opinion of Sherlock after the detective’s “death.” In “Hearse,” Anderson leads a conspiracy group¹⁰¹ that believes Sherlock Holmes escaped from St. Bart’s Hospital. At one point in this episode, Anderson’s conspiracy

¹⁰⁰ Moreover, I posit that Janine also indicates to viewers that Sherlock is capable of engaging in a heterosexual love affair, which clears up his sexuality to a certain extent and presents the Moriarty-Sherlock sexual relationship as a red herring.

¹⁰¹ This episode gets its name from the conspiracy group, which Anderson has named “The Empty Hearse” as an adaptation of “The Adventure of the Empty House” (1903). “Empty House” is the first story in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* and refers to the empty rooms at 221B Baker Street after Holmes’s death.

theorists discuss theories as to how Sherlock survived his encounter with Moriarty. One woman's solution is particularly salacious: Sherlock and Moriarty are lovers, and faked Sherlock's death. As fig. 2.12 shows, this woman's theory involves Sherlock and Moriarty sharing a passionate kiss (that Sherlock initiates) after they drop a decoy body for John's benefit. Anderson is outraged ("What? Are you out of your mind?"), but this theory indulges in the possibility of a sexual relationship between criminal and detective. Again, Moriarty and Sherlock queer Sherlock's traditional asexuality; even as a hypothetical/imaginary construct, this queering is significant. By presenting this fantasy, Moffat and Gatiss challenge viewers' understandings of this historical character: what happens if Sherlock Holmes *is* gay? However, Moriarty and Sherlock never consummate this relationship, and Moriarty commits suicide and Season 3 once again returns to the Sherlock-John homosocial relationship.

At the end of "The Reichenbach Fall" (S2E3), Jim Moriarty commits suicide in an attempt to destroy Sherlock Holmes's reputation.¹⁰² This suicide, I argue, underscores Moriarty's inability to conform to any gender norms: his gender fluidity is his death sentence. Mark Norris Lance and Alessandra Tanesini point out in "Identity Judgements, Queer Politics" that identities provide "scripts by which to live" (174). Moriarty has no script: his gender fluidity and undetermined sexuality leave him in a liminal space that, in a society defined by categorization, denies identity. On the one hand, this liminal status underscores queer theory's reliance on postmodernism and poststructuralism to reject "all categorizations as limiting and labeled by

¹⁰² In "The Reichenbach Fall," Moriarty and Sherlock's battle reaches a "conclusion," and ends with both consulting criminal and consulting detective "dead." Sherlock and John are at the top of their game in season three when Moriarty resurfaces with one purpose: to completely discredit Sherlock Holmes. Moriarty's attack on Sherlock is two-fold: first, the criminal turns Scotland Yard against the detective by kidnapping two children and tricking them into believing that it was Sherlock who took them away; and second, Moriarty claims to be a man named Richard Brook whom Sherlock hired to be his archival, and sells this fake story to a news reporter, completely discrediting Sherlock to the British public. Moriarty's antics end with criminal and detective on the rooftop of St. Bart's hospital, where Moriarty pulls out a gun and shoots himself through the mouth.

dominant power structures” (Kirsch 33). In this academic context, Jim Moriarty embodies queer theory’s attempts to deconstruct binaries. As Kirsch demonstrates, “the traditional ‘heterosexual/homosexual’ dichotomy should be abandoned, and that a third or more ways of describing and analyzing sex and gender should be proposed” (34). Moriarty presents viewers with an interpretation of this “third or more” hypothesis. On the other hand, Moriarty’s suicide complicates the activity of queering: how should the audience interpret the consulting criminal’s death? Is it the symbolic death of queerness or simply the termination of a dangerous villain? Given Moffat and Gatiss’ joint silence on Moriarty’s sexuality, the latter seems the most likely explanation.

Moffat and Gatiss are less cagey concerning their success in casting Andrew Scott as Jim Moriarty. In an interview published in the *Chicago Tribune*, Steven Gatiss says, "we [wanted] a demented [Moriarty]. We moved away from the original just because every supervillain since Moriarty has been a carbon copy of him." Andrew Scott fit this role: "We auditioned various people for the part and Andrew Scott was so good at doing it, so frightening, that we thought not only would we cast him but we'd write him in" (Wagner). Both Moffat and Gatiss expand on this point in film documentaries concerning the making of *Sherlock*. In *Unlocking Sherlock* (2014), for example, Moffat and Gatiss explain that Moriarty is both awful and funny. Gatiss describes Moriarty as, “self-consciously a villain. He knows what he’s doing, he’s an absolute nutcase.” Scott’s ability to inhabit the Moriarty character creates nuances that otherwise might be lost to the viewer.

Moriarty’s sexual and gender fluidity presents viewers with a complex character. While his inability to be “identified” contributes to his death, it also means that Moriarty does not necessarily *need* to live to “play” with Sherlock. Indeed, Moriarty’s emotional and sexual

harassment of the consulting detective does not end at the top of St. Bart’s Hospital. Aside from my aforementioned point concerning Moriarty’s bound and imprisoned body in “His Last Bow” (S3E3), Moriarty haunts Sherlock in the series’ final episode: “The Final Problem” (S4E3). In *Sherlock*’s last season, Moriarty makes his first posthumous appearance in “The Six Thatchers.” The consulting criminal resurrects himself in what Sherlock identifies as a “posthumous game” (S4E1): before his death, Moriarty joined forces with Eurus, Sherlock and Mycroft’s sister who resides in a mental asylum, to submit Sherlock to the ultimate challenge, testing the detective on everything from his deductive abilities to how much he loves his flatmate and his brother. While Moriarty is well and truly dead, he and Eurus pre-recorded messages of Moriarty for Eurus to use while putting Sherlock through this “final problem.” Moriarty’s messages to Sherlock are hauntingly similar to his messages while alive.

The deceased consulting criminal often offers video-recorded prompts (see fig. 2.13) that imply a game or form of play: “Come on now! All aboard” and “Fasten your seat belts. It’s gonna be a bumpy ride.” Moriarty also engages with double meaning when he says “This is



Figure 2.13. Jim Moriarty’s posthumous video recording from “The Final Problem” (S4E3); personal screen shot

where I get off” in the final stage of Eurus’ game, where Sherlock Holmes is (almost) forced to kill his brother. On the one hand, Moriarty implies that Eurus’ challenge has reached the end of the line and Sherlock must decide to kill either Mycroft or John and that

Moriarty’s role is therefore at an end. On the other hand, this phrase also implies that Moriarty is engaging in masturbation per its colloquial connotation, as Eurus comments that Moriarty

predicted that Sherlock would choose John over Mycroft, and therefore Moriarty finds pleasure in this final victory. This last episode also emphasizes a complication to Jim Moriarty's legacy: he is thoroughly and unapologetically a criminal. And this criminality is problematic.

By crafting such a fluid character as a violent, suicidal criminal, Moffat and Gatiss give themselves a way to opt out of making any definite stance regarding gender and sexuality in Anglo-American culture. While Jim Moriarty is a popular, and even attractive, villain, he is still a villain. His extreme violence always tempers his gender fluidity and undermines sexual orientation, such as kidnapping and blowing up an elderly disabled woman in "The Great Game" (S1E2). So, while audiences and fans may admire Andrew Scott's character and fantasize about a sexual relationship between Sherlock and Moriarty, the underlying point is that such a relationship would never happen because Sherlock has learned, as Inspector Lestrade points out in "The Final Problem" (S4E3), to be a "good man." So, while Moriarty can make sexual advances towards Sherlock, Sherlock does not embrace or act on those advances. Sherlock will admit to an attraction to Moriarty and even ask the criminal to "come play," but the detective always actively works to stop Moriarty. Audiences can interpret Sherlock's resistance in one of two ways: the first is that Sherlock's denial reinstates heteronormality (this heteronormality is separate from the Sherlock-John relationship as previously analyzed in my second chapter); the second is that Moriarty's villainy works to negate any acceptance of nuanced understandings of gender and sexuality. In either interpretation, heteronormativity remains the safe choice.

Conclusion

As Lynnette Porter states in her introduction to *Who Is Sherlock?* (2016), "Nearly 130 years after the introduction of Sherlock Holmes to readers, the Great Detective's identity is being

questioned, deconstructed, and reconstructed more than ever” (1). As this chapter demonstrates, the same can be said for Conan Doyle’s secondary characters. To return to Julie Sanders’s assertion regarding adaptation and appropriation’s joint purpose, these characters create new innovations in the Sherlock Holmes canon’s afterlife. Specifically, these adaptations’ use of fluid gender and sexuality emphasizes a pushback against detective fiction’s historical enforcement of cisgenderism, which Heather Duerre Humann defines as “the practice of enforcing the gender binary” (2). Jim Moriarty defies efforts at gender and sexual identification; Miss Hudson is an admired transgender woman and the venerable Mrs. Hudson utilizes her agency to both defy Anglo-American societal expectations of the elderly and queer two seemingly heterosexual male characters; Jamie Moriarty, Irene Adler, and Mary Watson blur gender binaries by synthesizing both masculine and feminine traits through their violence and female identities. While these challenges are, at times, problematic, the adaptations reveal an important shift in society. Given that detective fiction “reflects society’s attitudes about enforcing the gender binary” (Humann 25), I assert that these points of gender fluidity represent Anglo-American society’s increasing ambivalence towards this binary. This gender binary still exists, of course; however, the agency exhibited in these secondary characters as they play with gender and sexuality indicates that such transgressions are not only possible, but also popular, with Anglo-American audiences.

As Sabine Vanacker and Catherine Wynne state in their book concerning the multi-media afterlives of Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes canon “has become something to be negotiated, rather than followed to the letter; always hauntingly present, but, over time, sidestepped with ever-greater frequency” (47). Sherlock Holmes no longer belongs to Arthur Conan Doyle or his successors. Instead, the detective and his ratiocination, doctor companion, acquaintances, and casebooks belong to Anglo-Western culture to adapt and appropriate as

needed to fully explore current social and cultural conversations. This attention to current social and cultural conversations is the subject of my next chapter, too.

Chapter Three A Case Study in Sherlockian Masculinities

“As a discourse that manifests itself through genre, as both process and product, bromance provides a litmus test for discerning not only the extent to which homosexuality has been assimilated in contemporary culture but also the degree of comfort (or discomfort) that this culture actually experiences with such assimilated homosexuality.” – Michael DeAngelis, *Reading the Bromance*

Steeped in testosterone and masculinity, the canonical detective at 221B Baker Street embodies not just Victorian empirical reasoning and masculinist language codes, but also the physicality and adventurous spirit of the Victorian man. Sherlock Holmes’s cases take him (and oftentimes his partner Dr. John Watson) on quests that require not just rationality, but physical strength: a wrestling match with a suicidal madman (“A Study in Scarlet” [1887]); a race on the moors outside of Baskerville to discover the origin of a mysterious howl (*The Hound of the Baskervilles* [1901-1902]); and even a gruesome single-stick battle with an Austrian murderer’s henchmen (“The Adventure of the Illustrious Client” [1924]). This chapter examines Sherlock Holmes adaptations that maintain Sherlock Holmes and John Watson’s male gender and therefore their male-male relationship. I approach these adaptations as a series of studies that collectively reveal sexual and gendered tensions in the homosocial bond; specifically, these new interpretations of the homosocial bond attempt to re-direct or diffuse homosexual tensions. Thus, each adaptation interacts with the idea of the homosocial bond as sexual in nature. Per my first chapter, Eve Sedgwick defines the homosocial bond as a social bond between individuals of the same biological sex. Sedgwick chose her terminology to emphasize this bond’s “erotic emphasis” and argues that it lies on a continuum with homosexuality at one end and heterosexuality on the other. In this case, “homosexual” and “heterosexual” exist in relation to one another (Sedgwick 90). This understanding of sexuality provides nuances that sharp binaries

(such as masculine/feminine and male/female) would deny. These nuances exist in each of these adaptations and embody the idea of “masculinities” as opposed to “masculinity.”

This chapter reveals that contemporary adaptations are not satisfied with John Watson’s purportedly straightforward comments on Sherlock Holmes’s asexuality in “A Scandal in Bohemia” (1891):

[A]ll emotions regarding romance or the carnal act of sex were abhorrent to [Holmes’s] 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 have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer – excellent for drawing the veil from men’s motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. (Conan Doyle 145)

Such an explanation of Holmes’s sexual orientation might have satisfied Victorian readers.

However, the same complacency in regards to Holmes’s sexual identity does not translate into post-2010 adaptations and appropriations. The adaptations under discussion here queer the Holmes-Watson relationship and explore how the twenty-first-century constructs and negotiates male identities.

As a theoretical framework for this chapter, I approach masculinity as a plurality per Stefan Horlacher’s discussion of historical contexts of masculinity in his introduction to *Constructions of Masculinity in British Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present* (2011). Horlacher argues that masculinity studies has gone through two distinct phases: in the first stage (until the early 1990s), “masculinity was taken to be a singular, monolithic phenomenon” often identified as hegemonic, problematic, and exclusionary, but not closely examined for its content. In the second, current stage, “masculinity as a concept has undergone a process of differentiation into a range of masculinities and is now largely understood as a plurality” (10-11). This shift in masculinity as a concept in academia is a part of a growing acceptance of gender and sexuality as

historically differentiated concepts.¹⁰³ While I address the implications for such a “changeable continuum” (Horlacher 10) in regards to femininity and gender/sex in chapters two and four, here I specifically address masculinity in this context.

“Man” is ambiguous in and of itself because it “can be taken to refer either specifically to males or generically to human beings” (Brod 21). This ambiguity is increasingly significant in twenty-first-century discussions of masculinities and specifically how masculinity influences relationships between and among men. Anglo-American social and cultural understandings of masculinity pointedly influence emotional and physical intimacy between heterosexual men, a concept that will carry the most weight in this chapter. As discussed in my first chapter, the Victorian patriarchy and its creation of a sharp divide between men and women (i.e. separate spheres) fostered a homosocial environment where physical and emotional intimacy between men was acceptable and even preferable as a way of consolidating power and perpetuating gender roles. However, in the 1970s and 1980s an awareness of homosexuality instigated a fear among straight men:

In this epoch, straight men began to fear being homosexualized for displaying physical or emotional intimacy. Consequently...late twentieth-century hypermasculinity discourse arose in response to the mass cultural awareness of homosexuality among Western populations. (Robinson et al. 2)

Homosocial relationships between men shifted as men became emotionally distant out of a fear of homosexuality and of being perceived as homosexual. According to Robinson et al.’s study regarding millennial men and their relationships with each other, young men in the 1970s and 1980s replaced self-disclosure between male friends with activities like “playing sports, drinking, fixing things, and gambling” (3). This regression in emotional attachment created stasis in men’s relationships with other men, which social theorists identify as a “homohysteria” that

¹⁰³ For a more in-depth explanation of this point, please refer back to my introduction.

emphasized “masculine stoicism” (Robinson et al. 3-4). In other words, men’s close relationships became vulnerable to accusations of homosexuality and, as a consequence, became characterized by detachment and superficial relations. This third chapter examines how such homophobia no longer holds firm in relationships between men, but instead operates in the background.

Taken together, these studies illustrate an increasing acceptance of emotive and affective male-male relationships that are, first, more progressive than the homosocial bond between Conan Doyle’s Holmes and Watson; and second, still stifled by Anglo-American society’s reliance on heteronormativity as a general rule. I begin with Anthony Horowitz’s *The House of Silk* (2012), an adaptation the Conan Doyle Estate specifically commissioned Horowitz to write. Horowitz’s novel is a study in conservatism: despite his relative free reign in crafting a new Sherlock Holmes story, Horowitz does not stray far from Conan Doyle’s canonic characters. Second, I examine Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* film franchise, with *Sherlock Holmes* (2009)¹⁰⁴ and *Sherlock Holmes: Game of Shadows* (2011).¹⁰⁵ These films star Robert Downey Jr. as Sherlock Holmes and Jude Law as Dr. John Watson. When I refer to a bromance, I specifically mean Ritchie’s films. Third, I take up the case of BBC’s *Sherlock* (2010-2017) television series, which features Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as Dr. John Watson. While this franchise also develops a bromance between Holmes and Watson, the series does not contain the heterosexual resolution so necessary to the bromance’s structure. As an extension of this discussion regarding homosociality and the bromance, for my fourth case study I turn to a new kind of adaptation: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna

¹⁰⁴ *Sherlock Holmes* was released in theaters on December 25, 2009. While technically this release date places the movie six days before 2010, I include this movie in the post-2010 bracket for two technical reasons: first, those six days are marginal in the bigger time space of 2010-2018; and second, it was available in theaters and to purchase in 2010.

¹⁰⁵ A third movie in this franchise is currently in pre-production with a release date of December 25, 2020.

Waterhouse's *Mycroft Holmes* (2015). This novel takes up the masculine bond in the "buddy cop" genre, but not between Sherlock Holmes and John Watson, but instead between Mycroft Holmes and Cyrus Douglas. Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse approach Conan Doyle's canon from the perspective of Sherlock Holmes's older brother, Mycroft, and fill in the missing pieces regarding his life before "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter."¹⁰⁶ For my final case study, I reflect on Bill Condon's *Mr. Holmes* (2015). This film features Sir Ian McKellen as an elderly Sherlock Holmes whose fight with dementia conflicts with his memory regarding his final case. I examine this adaptation as a final case study because McKellen's portrayal explores how masculinity interacts with disability studies and ageism.

As a whole, this chapter's subject matter signals an Anglo-American cultural and social dissatisfaction with heterosexuality and the idea of stoic, dispassionate masculinity. And, at the same time, this subject matter also indicates a social and cultural reluctance to fully accept homosexuality and heterosexuality as a continuum and embrace the nuances inherent in such a continuum. Thus, this chapter demonstrates a greater acceptance of homosexuality (DeAngelis 9) but the need to still privilege heterosexuality as the norm.

Case Study 1: Horowitz's *The House of Silk* (2012)

The publication of *The House of Silk* indicates that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's drive to kill off his consulting detective is not something shared with his estate. Instead of letting the detective rest in peace, the Conan Doyle Estate approached an author well-known for his

¹⁰⁶ Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse just published a second novel in this universe, *Mycroft and Sherlock* (2018). I do not take up this novel here for two reasons: first, Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse wrote it as an independent chronicle instead of a sequel to *Mycroft Holmes*. So, while Mycroft and Cyrus are still present in this novel, it is not a continuation in their adventures together. Second, this novel specifically focuses on the relationship between Mycroft and Sherlock, two brothers trying to understand one another instead of two male friends flirting with the idea of homosexuality.

expertise in the detective genre. Anthony Horowitz, OBE¹⁰⁷ is recognized for his young adult novel series and various contributions to television and film. Aside from his Sherlock Holmes adaptations (*The House of Silk* and *Moriarty*¹⁰⁸), Horowitz's experience with the detective genre includes his work on the television series *Midsomer Murders* (1997 –), a British murder mystery series that follows two detectives in their never-ending quest to rid Midsomer County of its murderous citizens. His Alex Rider novel series, which features the titular character as a teenaged British spy, and *The Diamond Brothers*, a children's detective series, further situate Horowitz as a prolific and adept writer.¹⁰⁹ Horowitz's authorial *oeuvre* situates him as an expert in the detective genre, both on screen and in print. And yet *The House of Silk* is a stifled text.

Before I begin my study of *Silk*, I want to address the Estate's lack of control over Sherlock Holmes as a character. The Conan Doyle Estate was reluctant to give up Sherlock Holmes, but a 2014 legal case settled the matter and ruled in favor of placing the consulting detective in the public domain. *Klinger v. Conan Doyle Estate* ruled that Leslie Klinger had a right to use the Sherlock Holmes character and the Sherlock Holmes stories published before 1923 and that doing so did not infringe on any copyright, despite character developments in Sherlock Holmes himself in later canonical stories:

Even though the modern (post-Doyle) Sherlock Holmes stories copy copyrightable material in the pre-1923 fiction, the copyrights on that fiction, which cover copy-rightable elements in it that include original depictions of characters (like Holmes and Dr. Watson), have expired. We reject the Doyle estate's argument that because stories published by Doyle between 1923 and his death – and still under copyright – depicted

¹⁰⁷ Order of the British Empire

¹⁰⁸ Of note is Horowitz's other Sherlock Holmes adaptation, *Moriarty: A Novel* (2015). This work is in no way conservative in terms of its adherence to Conan Doyle's canon. It's told from the point of view of a Pinkerton agent named Frederick Chase who follows Athenley Jones, a Scotland Yard man from the Sherlock Holmes canon, on a case. In a plot twist in the final chapter, the reader learns that the Pinkerton detective is none other than Professor James Moriarty in disguise. I do not mention this work in detail in this dissertation because it does not directly deal with the Holmes and Watson relationship. Therefore, its subversive challenge to the Sherlock Holmes canon lies outside the parameters of my current study.

¹⁰⁹ This list of Horowitz's career accomplishments is abbreviated. His complete body of work is available on his website: www.anthonhorowitz.com

those characters in a more “rounded form” than found in the pre-1923 fiction, the “flat” characters of the earlier stories were protected by the copyrights still in force on the “rounded” characters of the later stories. (United States, Court of Appeals Seventh Circuit 2)

In other words, Sherlock Holmes’s increased complexity as a character in the post-1923 stories does not give the Conan Doyle Estate the right to keep this character (and others, such as Dr. John Watson) under copyright. The Seventh Circuit further emphasizes that when “a story falls into the public domain, story elements – including characters covered by the expired copyright – become fair game for follow-on authors” (3). The Circuit further criticizes the Estate for bullying adaptors into paying licensing fees, claiming, “The Doyle estate’s business strategy is plain: charge a modest license fee for which there is no legal basis, in the hope that the ‘rational’ writer or publisher asked for the fee will pay it rather than incur a greater cost, in legal expenses, in challenging the legality of the demand” (6).

In its conclusion, the Seventh Circuit calls for the Conan Doyle Estate to change its business model for its own self-interest (7). However, I would argue that the Estate is still reluctant to let go of its most lucrative asset. The Estate’s language on its website regarding “entertainment” (adaptation) is carefully worded to sound optimistic regarding Sherlock Holmes in the twenty-first-century: “Some of the world’s best have given Conan Doyle’s beloved characters new faces, bodies and personalities. His flexible and vibrant characters allow a constant rejuvenation and new embodiment time and time again. We actively seek the new, the daring and exciting to keep the tempo fast paced and relevant for whichever reinvention comes next” (“Estate in Action”). Underneath this mission statement are advertisements¹¹⁰ for current

¹¹⁰ Two significant points need to be made here, too. First, the Conan Doyle estate *does* mention several novel series (including those by Anthony Horowitz) *but not* the two series under discussion in my next chapter, Brittany Cavallaro’s *Charlotte Holmes* series and Sherry Thomas’s *Lady Sherlock* series. Second, the Conan Doyle Estate does advertise *Miss Sherlock*, a Japanese adaptation of the Sherlock Holmes canon featuring a female Holmes and a

popular Sherlock Holmes adaptations: NBC's *Elementary*, BBC's *Sherlock*, Bill Condon's *Mr. Holmes* and Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, as well as Etan Cohen's *Holmes & Watson* (2018).¹¹¹ Given the language of the Seventh Circuit's ruling, one can perhaps read between the upbeat lines and key words in the aforementioned comment on adaptation and infer that the Estate promotes cooperation between adaptation and Estate to maintain monetary benefits. *Silk* most obviously fulfills this need, and engages readers in Conan Doyle's world with a few minor updates. Thus, *The House of Silk* is a study in conservative adaptation. While Horowitz modernizes Holmes and Watson for readers in specific areas, such as the novel's pace, Horowitz does not challenge the Sherlock Holmes canon and its implications for gender and sexuality.

Silk's conservatism comes first and foremost in its narration. Dr. John Watson is again the narrator in *Silk*, and the reader can easily recognize Conan Doyle in Horowitz's narrative style. For example, *Silk* begins with Holmes pulling a thought straight from Watson's head:

'Influenza is unpleasant,' Sherlock Holmes remarked, 'but you are right in thinking that, with your wife's help, the child will recover soon.'
'I very much hope so,' I replied, then stopped and gazed at him in wide-eyed astonishment. My tea had been halfway to my lips but I returned it to the table with such force that the cup and the saucer almost parted company. 'But for Heaven's sake, Holmes!' I exclaimed. 'You have taken the very thoughts from my head. I swear I have not uttered a word about the child nor his illness. You know that my wife is away – that much you might have deduced from my presence here. But I have not yet mentioned to you the reason for her absence and I am certain that there has been nothing in my behaviour that could have given you any clue.' (Horowitz 6)

Holmes is flexing his ratiocination here and readers will recall that Holmes performs a similar feat of intellectual strength at the beginning of "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" (1903)

female Watson working in Tokyo, Japan. While this adaptation is significant and warrants academic study, it does not factor into my dissertation because it falls outside the Anglo-American parameters.

¹¹¹ *Holmes & Watson* (2018) is a comedy starring Will Ferrell as Sherlock Holmes and John C. Reilly as Dr. John Watson. This movie does not factor into my dissertation for two reasons: first, it reached theaters after I had planned out my chapters and started my research; and second, its horrifying reviews mean that it did not make a significant impact on popular culture.

when Holmes interrupts Watson's private musings with the comment, "So, Watson...you do not propose to invest in South African securities?" (Conan Doyle 480). Watson, who had been sitting in silence with Holmes for several hours, is utterly shocked. Holmes explains that the deduction was quite simple: Watson had chalk on his fingers from the club last night; Watson only plays billiards with Thurston; Thurston had an option for a South African property; Watson has not asked for his cheque book; therefore, Watson does not propose to invest in the South African securities (Conan Doyle 481). The parallel Horowitz creates between his Holmes and Conan Doyle's Holmes is well-written and captures Holmes's essence as a magician-like intellectual.

Holmes further exhibits the same disdain for Watson's stories as the Conan Doyle canon, commenting to the doctor in *Silk*, "Excellent. Sometimes I wonder how I will be able to find the energy or the will to undertake another investigation if I am not assured that the general public will be able to read every detail of it in due course" (Horowitz 34). This comment parallels one from Holmes in "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" (1904) where Holmes chastises Watson over his dramatic flair: "Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations" (Conan Doyle 602). Additionally, Horowitz maintains the same storytelling tone as Conan Doyle's Watson:

Holmes had finished his pipe long before the art dealer came to the end of his narration, and had been listening with his long fingers clasped in front of him and a look of intense concentration on his face. (Horowitz 31)

Our visitor glanced with some apparent surprise at the languid, lounging figure of the man who had been no doubt depicted to him as the most incisive reasoner and most energetic agent in Europe. ("A Scandal in Bohemia")

These two excerpts of Watson's description of Holmes stress Holmes's key physical characteristics: his long fingers and his languid features. These parallels moreover emphasize Sherlock Holmes as the controlling actor in the case: Holmes has finished his pipe; Holmes

possesses a languid figure. Thus, both canonic and adapted Watson play into the narrative formula that centers on Holmes, Holmes's cases, and Holmes's intelligence.

The House of Silk begins a few days after the close of "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" (1913). This adaptation maintains the homosocial language of the Sherlock Holmes canon, a topic I examined in my first chapter. When placing Horowitz's text in comparison to Conan Doyle's works, the similarities become glaringly obvious:

[Holmes] had greeted me warmly, and as I took my place opposite him, I felt the strange sensation that I was awakening from a dream. (Horowitz 7)
"Ah, my dear Watson," said [Holmes], striding into the room, "I am very delighted to see you! I trust that Mrs. Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of the Sign of Four."
"Thank you, we are both very well," I said, shaking him warmly by the hand. ("The Adventure of the Stock-Broker's Clerk")

Here again Horowitz utilizes his knowledge of the Sherlock Holmes canon to accurately portray Holmes and Watson's relationship: it is only natural that Holmes would be enthusiastic and appreciative of Watson's arrival at 221B Baker Street in both canonical and adapted texts. As a parallel supposition, Watson is of course happy to see his friend again. While readers can find comfort in such familiarities, these parallels between canon and adaptation leave little room for experimentation, and the homosocial relationship between Horowitz's Holmes and Watson reveals a stagnation in character development. Holmes still uses the phrase "my dear Watson," for example, on several occasions. Aside from the passage above, Horowitz's Holmes calls the doctor "Dear old Watson" (Horowitz 45) when the two of them discuss Mr. Carstairs's mysterious stalker. As added proof of Watson's importance in Holmes's life, the detective exclaims "My trusty Watson!" when Watson relates to the detective how he evaded two stalkers (Horowitz 227). Holmes further assures the doctor, "I knew I could count on you. And I would suggest you bring your service revolver, Watson. There are many dangers afoot and I fear it is

going to be a long night” (Horowitz 234). And, when the wayward orphan Sally Dixon stabs the good doctor, Holmes cries out, “My dear Watson!” and Watson notes to himself that he must thank his attacker “who demonstrated that my physical well-being did at least mean something to [Sherlock Holmes] and that he was not as coldly disposed towards me as he sometimes pretended” (Horowitz 93). But this warm language and the occasional gesture of concern for Watson’s safety are the extent of Holmes’s emotive displays.

Horowitz’s Watson returns Holmes’s affection in tones again reminiscent of Conan Doyle’s doctor. In the canonic “The Adventure of the Dying Detective,” Holmes starves himself to fake a fatal illness. His purpose in doing so is to draw out Culverton Smith, a cunning murderer. When Horowitz’s Watson begins his narration for *Silk*, Holmes is recovering from this starvation and Watson notes with satisfaction his friend’s progress, commenting to the reader, “He had always been of a distinctly lean and even cadaverous physique, those sharp eyes accentuated by his aquiline nose, but at least there was some colour in his skin and everything about his voice and manner pronounced him to be very much his old self” (Horowitz 7). Watson furthermore possesses a deep emotional connection to Holmes, which allows him to understand the detective’s moods: “Once again, I could feel the tension burning within him, the unremitting sense of energy and drive that propelled him through his every case” (Horowitz 91). As another parallel to my first chapter and its analysis of Holmes and Watson’s playful and endearing language towards one another, Horowitz’s Holmes and Watson also channel any homosexual desires into a patriarchal homosocial bond. *Silk*, therefore, maintains rather than challenges canonical structures. Holmes’s last words linger with the reader as Watson closes his narrative in the afterword: “Watson, you are the best of friends and I am aware that I have been but poor company. What I need is a little more time alone. But we will have breakfast tomorrow and I am

sure you will find me in better spirits” (Horowitz 293). This closing comment seals Holmes and Watson in a time capsule of Victorian brotherhood, one that perpetuates hegemonic principles associated with the homosocial relationship.

As a final point in this case study, paratextual sources complement my analysis regarding *Silk*'s conservatism and its adherence to canonical structures.¹¹² In an interview with Christian DuChateau of CNN, Horowitz notes that “he didn’t tinker much with Conan Doyle’s creation, hoping to preserve the flavor and tone of the original stories while giving the new novel a modern sensibility and pace.” As my previous analysis of *Silk*'s language and tone indicates, Horowitz accurately embodies the “flavor and tone” of Conan Doyle’s canon. *Silk*'s plot with its double caseload exemplifies the “modern sensibility and pace” of Horowitz’s writing style. Holmes and Watson’s sleuthing is divided into two cases: the first regards Mr. Edmund Carstairs. Carstairs is afraid that a certain Irish mafia man, Keelan O’Donaghue, has followed him from Boston to London. Carstairs is part owner of an art gallery in London. A prominent Boston Brahmin, Cornelius Stillman, visited the gallery and purchased a number of works for his new gallery in Boston. The paintings made the journey to New York safely, but while travelling via train to Boston, the Irish Flat Cap Gang attacked the train and destroyed the paintings. Carstairs sailed directly for Boston and he and Stillman came up with a plan to hire Pinkerton detectives to ferret out the Flat Cap Gang and in particular its leaders: two Irish twins, Rourke and Keelan O’Donaghue. The Pinkerton agents tracked down the Flat Cap Gang and the ensuing gunfight left Rourke O’Donaghue dead and Keelan O’Donaghue missing in action. Carstairs suspects that Keelan has followed him back to London and requests Holmes’s assistance. The

¹¹² To refresh: A paratextual source is “the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public” (Genette and Maclean 261). In other words, paratextual sources are artifacts (interviews, other movies, publications, etc.) that influence audience/reader perceptions of the primary text.

second plot thread involves Holmes and Watson uncovering a pedophile molestation ring. The disappearance of Ross, one of Holmes's Baker Street Irregulars, takes *Silk* away from Mr. Carstairs and his Irish-American gangster and towards a more sinister plot to sell young, orphaned boys to men for a night. Holmes and Watson follow a series of clues that lead to the Chorley Grange School for Boys, run by the Reverend Charles Fitzsimmons and his wife. Ostensibly a pseudo-rehabilitation house for young boys in poverty, the house actually supplies the House of Silk with boys for men willing to pay for them.¹¹³

The dual exploration of an Irish-American gangster and pedophile ring creates a novel with a faster pace than the stories that comprise the Sherlock Holmes canon, including the longer works such as *The Hound of Baskerville* (1901-1902) and *The Valley of Fear* (1914-1915). While *Baskerville* and *Fear* follow Holmes and Watson on more detailed and lengthy casework, both contain one overarching narrative. *Silk*, on the other hand, must find resolution on two fronts. First, Holmes discovers that Keelan O'Donaghue is in fact a woman, and more specifically Mr. Carstairs's new wife. To avenge her brother, Keelan seduced and married Edmund Carstairs and has been poisoning his mother and sister in his house. Second, Holmes and Watson uncover the pedophile ring that leads back to a corrupt police officer and abusive headmaster. This synthesis of two separate cases is more in keeping with current trends in detective novels. Works such as Kerry Greenwood's *Cocaine Blues* (2006), Tana French's *Into the Woods* (2007), and Chelsea Cain's *Heartsick* (2007) (to name a few) provide two seemingly

¹¹³ On a noteworthy tangent: when Watson discovers that the House of Silk is a house of "ill-repute" that services men looking for young boys, Watson comments that "These men had a predilection for young boys and their wretched victims had been drawn from those same schoolchildren I had seen at Chorley Grange, plucked off the London streets with no families or friends to care for them, no money and no food, for the most part ignored by a society to which they were little more than an inconvenience" (Horowitz 256). This final comment is reminiscent not of Conan Doyle's works but more of Charles Dickens. As Horowitz cites *Great Expectations* as his favorite book (*The Guardian*), perhaps it is not surprising that Watson's comments include issues of poverty and Victorian living conditions.

disparate mysteries that come together at the end. This parallel to other twenty-first-century detective novels indicates Horowitz's modernity but also his reluctance to challenge the Holmes-Watson relationship.

Therefore, in the context of adaptation and adaptation's purpose, *Silk* is "a mode of celebration" rather than one of critique (Sanders 135). Horowitz celebrates the Victorian Holmes and Watson and their adventures, and Horowitz's maintenance of the Holmes-Watson homosocial relationship underscores their perfection rather than their flaws. *Silk* was well-received, too, indicating that more conservative adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes canon are still popular. Horowitz's novel has between a 4 and 4.5 out of 5-star review on most major book review websites and reviews from major newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, *Independent*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, praise Horowitz's work. *Silk*'s conservatism in adaptation perhaps also responds directly to Horowitz's later comment in the same CNN interview: "It was important to me that I should be allowed to work on my own so nobody gave me notes... To be fair to the estate, they put their complete trust in me and I hope I've repaid it" (DuChateau). If Horowitz hopes to "repay" the Conan Doyle Estate's trust in him, one could infer that Horowitz does not wish to critique or challenge Sherlock Holmes, John Watson, or their relationship with one another. Instead, Horowitz adapts the plot of *Silk* to work at a faster pace and gives the reader more complex narrative action. As such, I present this adaptation to the reader as an introductory study to adaptations that take greater chances in exploring heterosexuality and homosexuality in a homosocial relationship. Horowitz's work is clearly meant as an homage to Conan Doyle's

creation and therefore does not challenge any of the hegemonic gender and social systems present in the original canon and in Victorian society.¹¹⁴

Case Study 2: Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* Franchise

Guy Ritchie's "steampunk action heroes" (DuChateau) romp and roll around London and Western Europe in pursuit of criminal masterminds. Ritchie's bombastic dramatization and wholly overexaggerated adaptation of the Sherlock Holmes canon crafts a playful "bromance" that indulges in homoeroticism without *actually* exploring a gay relationship between Holmes and Watson. The phrase "bromance" first entered the Anglo-American lexicon as a popular term around 2005 with the rise of on-screen intimate relationships between two male protagonists. A bromance is generally defined as "an emotionally intense bond between presumably straight males who demonstrate an openness to intimacy that they neither regard, acknowledge, avow, nor express sexually" (DeAngelis 1). Examples of the bromance from other popular culture sources include Peter Klaven and Sydney Fife from *I Love You, Man* (2009), Christopher Turk and J.D. Dorian from *Scrubs* (2001-2010), and Shawn Spencer and Burton Guster of *Psych* (2006-2014). The bromance's purpose is to explore male intimacy. In exploring this intimacy, the bromance embraces both the positives and negatives of the male homosocial relationship. Specifically, "bromance both affirms and problematizes the centrality of heteronormative relations" (DeAngelis 22). The men in a bromance construct their relationship around intimacy but this relationship also displays a need to identify both men as heterosexual. This genre then treats two overlapping issues: "the anxieties elicited by the proximity of

¹¹⁴ As a foreshadowing note: *The House of Silk* stands in stark contrast to another Neo-Victorian adaptation, Sherry Thomas's *Lady Sherlock* Series, which actively combats gendered stereotypes and the idea of separate spheres. This series is part of my fourth chapter.

homosociality to homoeroticism, and the...conflict stemming from the freedom that homosociality offers to its bros even as this freedom remains constantly at odds with heterosexual romance” (DeAngelis 20). Moreover, the bromance does not challenge gender binaries in the same way that a queered relationship would do so. While the bromance, as I will demonstrate here, transgresses lines of intimacy and physical closeness, the bromance’s need to endorse and revert to heteronormativity prevents its becoming a radical relationship.

In *Sherlock Holmes*, Holmes and Watson race against time to uncover Lord Blackwood’s schemes against the British government. Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong) ostensibly resurrects himself from the grave after hanging for his murderous crimes and terrorizes London. In the end, Holmes and Watson (with the help of Irene Adler) learn that Blackwood is concocting a poison, which he plans to disperse as a gas to Parliament during the next meeting. Once he has murdered all the Ministers of Parliament not initiated into his coup, Blackwood intends to take over the British government. Holmes and Watson (of course) stop Blackwood and save the nation. Ritchie’s sequel, *Game of Shadows*, pits Holmes against Professor Moriarty (Jared Harris) as Moriarty begins the final stages of his scheme to instigate a world war through the murder of an ambassador at an international summit. Holmes and Watson (again, of course) stop Professor Moriarty, and for Holmes the victory is two-fold: he saves Europe from starting a world war and exacts revenge for Irene Adler’s murder.¹¹⁵

An integral part to Ritchie’s franchise is London itself and participating in Conan Doyle’s construction of London as Holmes’s city. As Conan Doyle’s Watson notes in “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” (1893), Holmes “loved to lie in the very center of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsible to every little rumour or

¹¹⁵ Professor Moriarty poisons Irene Adler when they take tea together at the beginning of *Game of Shadows*.

suspicion of unsolved crime” (849). This quote stresses that Conan Doyle created a character that is both detective and *flaneur*. The French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) coined the term *flaneur* to describe the male urban explorer, whose essence resided in his privileged gaze and ability to traverse metropolises to observe his surroundings. Moreover, the *flaneur* and his voyeurism “presupposed a privileged male subject whose identity was stable, coherent, and anonymous” (Walkowitz 16). Sherlock Holmes is just such an explorer: a creature of London, Holmes disguises himself to enter and penetrate both the lower and upper classes to unearth clues and solve cases. This division between lower and upper classes creates a divided city; “London is a duality of both urban jungle (the hunting ground) and a constructed city that represents reason, culture, achievement, and order” (“A Singular Case of Identity” 101). And, at the center of this city is 221B Baker Street where Holmes and Watson create order from chaos because Holmes’s status as a *flaneur* gives him the ability to enter all abodes in the name of justice. This penetrating male gaze situates Sherlock Holmes within the confines of Victorian masculine ideals. Given the Neo-Victorian setting of Ritchie’s films, Holmes and Watson are ensconced in the same hegemonic social and cultural constructions regarding gender and sexuality as Conan Doyle’s canonic characters. Thus, my analysis in this case study posits that Guy Ritchie’s adaptations play with Eve Sedgwick’s heterosexual-homosexual continuum through the bromance. The bromance, then, is a contemporary interpretation of the homosocial relationship between Holmes and Watson. The end result is a conservatism in Holmes and Watson’s respective sexual identities.

Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law’s relationship as Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson fulfills the requirements for a bromance. The first instance of a bromance comes from Holmes and Watson’s use of the domestic space. When the audience first witnesses Holmes and

Watson together, they have tracked Lord Blackwood to an abandoned Gothic hall where he is performing a ritual over the writhing body of a scantily-clad young woman. Watson finds Holmes in the shadows and their first comments to one another are not regarding Lord Blackwood's activity, but their domestic life:

Watson: Did you remember your revolver?

Holmes: Knew I forgot something. Thought I'd left the stove on.

Watson: You did.

The stove is clearly a domestic concern and not relevant to their current situation and this brief conversation emphasizes Holmes and Watson's domestic partnership, rather than their casework.

This emphasis on domesticity characterizes *Sherlock Holmes*. When Lord Blackwood summons Holmes for one last visit before his execution, Holmes and Watson fight in their brougham on the way to the jail. This fight (over a waistcoat that Holmes stole from Watson because, to quote Holmes, "We agreed it was too small for you") ends with Holmes and Watson affectionately calling one another "old cock" and "mother hen." These domestic nicknames for one another speak to their intimacy because they feel secure enough with one another for this domestic banter that reminds viewers of a grumpy husband and a doting wife. Moreover, Holmes is often aggressive in his insistence that he and Watson are domestic partners. For example, in *Sherlock Holmes*, Holmes constantly corrects Watson with the pronoun "our" when Watson uses "my":

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

Holmes: How so?

Watson: Why else would I continually be led into situations...where you deliberately withhold your plans from me? Why else?

Holmes: You've never complained of my methods before.

Watson: I'm not complaining.

Holmes: What do you call this?

Watson: How am I complaining? I never complain. Do I complain about you practicing the violin in the morning...or your mess, your lack of hygiene, or the fact that you steal

my clothes?

Holmes: We have a barter system.

Watson: Do I complain about you setting fire to *my* rooms?

Holmes: *Our* rooms.

Watson: *The* rooms. When do I complain that you experiment on *my* dog?

Holmes: *Our* dog.

Watson: On *the* dog.

Holmes: Gladstone is *our* dog. (Italics added by me.)

Holmes's persistent use of pronouns such as "our" clearly marks Holmes and Watson as a "couple" in the broader definition of two persons joined together. By contrast, Watson's equally consistent use of the neutral "the" negates any homosexual implications that arise from Holmes's "our." This pronoun example underscores the bromance's ideological function: "its mythical meaning-making strategies provide a way for straight men to be intimate, and its narrative structure serves to contain and direct this intimacy in ways that ensure its accessibility to its mainstream and heterosexual target markets while also refraining from alienating viewers who do not identify as heterosexual" (DeAngelis 13). The bromance, in other words, is a paradox that straddles the line between homosexual and heterosexual to appeal to a wider audience. Holmes and Watson's domesticity is a gesture of intimacy and plays with the idea of homosexuality. In the above example, Holmes's use of "our" plays up that intimacy. Simultaneously, Watson's neutral "the" emphasizes his heterosexuality. Thus, this exchange appeals to a wide audience because it contains language that emphasizes intimacy among seemingly straight men *but* who viewers could interpret as homosexual.

Holmes is the primary actor in persuading Watson to admit his emotional attachment to the detective. When Holmes and Watson set out for the pawn shop Maddison & Haig to track down another clue regarding Lord Blackwood's revival from the dead, Holmes hires a gypsy woman (Flora) to persuade Watson that their current domestic arrangements are ideal and that Watson's decision to leave 221B and bachelorhood for matrimony will be disastrous:

Flora: Oh. Oh. I see two men. Brothers. Not in blood, but in bond.
Watson: What of Mary?
Flora: M for Mary, for marriage. Oh, you will be married.
Watson: Go on.
Flora: Oh! I see patterned tablecloths...and, oh, china figurines...and, oh, lace doilies.
Holmes: Doilies.
Watson: Lace doilies? Holmes. (eye roll) Does your depravity know no bounds?
Holmes: No.
Flora: Oh, she turns to fat and, oh, she has a beard and...
Holmes: What of the warts?
Flora: She's covered in warts.
Watson: Enough.
Holmes: Are they extensive?
Watson: Please, enough.

Again, Holmes forces Watson to confront their intimacy, a requirement of the bromance (DeAngelis 12) and Watson struggles to suppress or redirect that conversation into other topics. In the above-mentioned scene, Holmes gets his way in the end: Watson misses tea with Mary's parents because he chooses to stay with Holmes as he follows clues leading to a secret laboratory where Reordan, one of Blackwood's men, has been experimenting with drugs to fake death.

One specific scene in *Game of Shadows* aptly underscores how the bromance interacts with Eve Sedgwick's homosexual-heterosexual continuum. The overt homoeroticism "provid[es] the fantasy of homosexuality wrapped up in the security of...heteronormativity" (Lennard 284). When Professor Moriarty's men attack Watson and Mary (Kelly Reilly) on their way to Brighton for their honeymoon, Holmes rescues the newlyweds after sneaking on board the train as a woman. While Watson fires bullets at Moriarty's men, Holmes tosses Mary out the train window. Mary's absence leaves two men: one cross-dressed as a woman, the other in his usual masculine clothing. The significance in this scene is two-fold. First, it creates an explicit connection between Holmes and Watson and sex. In particular, towards the end of this scene, after Watson learns that Holmes has tossed Mary out the window, Watson attacks Holmes and rips off the man's bra while Holmes wraps his legs around Watson's waist to defend himself.

This physicality is blatantly homoerotic and more intimate than any scene between John Watson and his wife. After reconciling to their current situation, Holmes says to his companion, “Lie down with me, Watson,” while they wait for Moriarty’s men to stop firing their guns. The result, per figure 3.1, is a womanly Holmes and a manly Watson lying down together. As a counter point, Mary Watson survives her fall into the Thames and is picked up by Mycroft Holmes and escorted to safety. Sherlock Holmes does not remove Mary but instead protects her for John Watson. As a logical conclusion, Watson remains married to Mary and Holmes tosses Moriarty



Figure 3.1. Holmes and Watson together in the train, personal screenshot.

off a cliff to avenge Irene Adler, who Moriarty poisoned at the beginning of *Game of Shadows*. As such, this scene is particularly appropriate in exemplifying

how the bromance presents the idea of homosexuality but ultimately reaches a heterosexual conclusion.

Moreover, this train scene highlights the significance of clothing to sexualize women and de-sexualize men:

While Western women’s clothes are designed to call attention to women’s bodies, with round curves and varied colors and textures revealing the skin and its contours, men’s clothing is designed to hide the fact that men have bodies. The Western business suit creates a box-like covering, with straight lines, much more monolithic colors and textures, and very little variation in fashion from year to year so as not to call attention to itself, in contrast to the fluctuation in women’s fashion and makeup. Thus, we reinforce the construction of women as sex objects and men as disembodied intellects, inscribing onto our bodies the mind-body split that maps onto the male-female divide as part of patriarchal ideology. (Brod 23)

Watson's masculine attire contrasted to Holmes exemplifies this divide. John Watson wears muted colors: a grey-and-white pin-striped button-down, grey trousers, and a dark grey vest. Sherlock Holmes is a riot of color in his bright blue eye shadow and red lips; there is also Holmes's attire, a bright blue-striped hat with many frills, a lacy corset, and bright skirt. Holmes's act of cross-dressing sexualizes *and* feminizes him in a manner that, while comical and transgressive in the context of the homosexual-heterosexual continuum, nevertheless conforms to Western gender norms that privileges patriarchal ideology. Furthermore, this use of drag as a comedic gesture has a complicated place in Anglo-American culture. I specifically identify Holmes's cross-dressing as drag because he "inhabiting a female persona as part of a comedic routine," which is one definition of drag (Whybray 171). While superficially Holmes is dressed in drag to sneak onto the train, for the audience this piece of drag is meant to be comedic and relieve the sexual tension between Holmes and Watson. In his article on drag performance, Adam Whybray argues that drag must be examined on an individual basis (178) and that specific factors come into play when examining the purpose of drag:

...there must be factors either inherent or extrinsic to the phenomenon of drag that determine whether a particular drag performance is reactionary (i.e. misogynist; enforcing hegemonic gender norms; transphobic; etc.) or progressive (i.e. feminist; exposing received gender norms as performative; transpositive, etc.) or falls more ambivalently between these two poles. (170)

Given this film franchise's marginalization of women and its affective male relationships, I interpret this scene as falling towards ambivalence: the audience is meant to enjoy Holmes's drag, not see it as an attack on those who perform drag. However, Holmes's performance does not push audiences to "susp[en]d their belief so as to invest in the fantasy of hyper-real femininity embodied by the drag queen" (Whybray 173). Holmes's haphazard attempts at drag with smeared make-up and disheveled clothing do not fool the audience. Given these

stipulations, this drag performance is ultimately one that serves the bromance, rather than revealing the “vacillation between incongruity and congruity” (Whybray 173).

As the bromance plot explores intimacy between two heterosexual men, female characters and love interests naturally hold a place of importance because they prevent heterosexual intimacy from evolving into homosexual intimacy. Per Michael DeAngelis’s argument in his introduction to *Reading the Bromance* (2014),

Female characters do occupy less prominent positions than males in the bromance in terms of screen time, but because of the centrality of home they remain central to the genre’s structure as a motivating force that regulates male protagonists’ actions in often stereotypically depicted ways – setting deadlines and putting into question the assumed security of the marriage contract. (12)

DeAngelis’s point here is that the female characters, while placed in a secondary or supporting role, hold significance because they motivate the male characters and therefore ensure male heterosexuality. For example, Watson goes through with his marriage to Mary in *Game of Shadows* and her peripheral presence acts as a reminder to the audience that Watson is a heterosexual man. Mary is always loving with Watson: she pays his bail when he and Holmes are arrested after their fight with Blackwood’s men in *Sherlock Holmes*; she knits Watson a scarf; and she even takes an interest in his writings about his adventures with Holmes, telling her future husband at the end of *Sherlock Holmes* that she hopes to read them all. To complement this commitment, Watson himself is always supportive of the idea of marriage, even when Holmes is combative and abusive towards the idea:

Holmes: I’m so very worried. Your vitality’s been drained from you. Marriage is the end, I tell you.

Watson: I think of it as the beginning.

Holmes: Armageddon.

Watson: Rebirth.

Holmes: Restriction.

Watson: Structure.

Holmes: Answering to a woman.

Watson: Being in a relationship. A life of matrimony, the possibility of a family. Who wants to die alone? (*Game of Shadows*)

Despite this aversion to matrimony, Holmes ensures that Watson makes it to the church on time after a very rowdy stag night in *Game of Shadows*. This commitment to Watson's marriage despite his antics with the gypsy Flora emphasizes the bromance's need to demonstrate intimacy (Holmes and Watson's relationship) while ensuring that the characters do not overtly express homosexual desire (Watson's marriage).

Of course, I cannot mention Mary Watson without also mentioning Irene Adler (Rachel McAdams). Her interactions with Holmes in Ritchie's franchise, unlike in the canonical "A Scandal in Bohemia," imply that the two share a sexual history. At the beginning of *Sherlock Holmes*, McAdams's Irene is confident and cunning, but her ultimate fate is that of sacrificial lamb for first Blackwood and then Moriarty. When Irene first visits 221B Baker Street to recruit Holmes to find Reordan, Watson teases his companion saying, "Why is the only woman you've ever cared about a criminal? Are you a masochist? [...] She's the only adversary who ever outsmarted you. Twice. Made a proper idiot out of you. [...] What could she possibly need [from you]? An alibi? A beard? A human canoe" (*Sherlock Holmes*). Watson's use of "beard" here is interesting because viewers can interpret it as an anachronism that, in the twenty-first-century lexicon, means a person of the opposite sex used to give a homosexual person the appearance of being heterosexual. Thus, Watson might be implying that Irene Adler *could be* homosexual and by implication not a conduit through which Holmes can establish his heterosexuality. Moreover, despite Irene's comment to Holmes that she has "our room" at the Grand Hotel and her obvious affection for Holmes, all they share together on-screen is a chaste kiss on the cheek. Therefore, if Irene Adler is not a love interest regulating Holmes's actions, Holmes's own innuendos towards Watson take on a greater homosexual value.

However, the tantalizing suggestion that Irene Adler is gay loses out in favor of the bromance. Holmes and Watson embody the bromance as a discourse that “facilitates intimate bondings between heterosexual men – bondings that are enabled by a newfound heteronormative comfort with a more-present-than-ever homosexuality” that ultimately align “as closely as possible with the workings of heteronormativity even as they simultaneously reveal the instability of heteronormativity itself as an identity or a practice” (DeAngelis 16). As discussed in the above analysis, while Holmes and Watson engage in playful, domestic banter and put themselves in sexually-charged situations, they are ultimately coded as heterosexual (Watson) or at least ambiguous (Holmes). Thus, Holmes and Watson engage in the paradoxical nature of the bromance without challenging it. And yet, Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* franchise is noteworthy for one significant positive engagement with Anglo-American culture: its bromance promotes the normalization of emotive and physical friendship between men, a trend in popular cinema and television that works to combat the homophobia that colored men’s relationships in the 1980s after the AIDS epidemic. Specifically, the bromance “represents an increased recognition that young men are permitted to have more diverse and homosocial masculine identities” (Robinson et al. 7). These intimate scenes between Holmes and Watson, on one hand, normalize attachment and physical contact between male friends. On the other hand, Holmes and Watson never cross the line into open homosexuality.

Paratextual sources promote this positive portrayal of emotive relationships between men. Downey Jr. and Law display a physicality and affection for one another in interviews and promotional material for the *Sherlock Holmes* franchise that parallels their on-screen characters. For example, in an interview for *Tribute Movies*,¹¹⁶ a Canadian film promotion and ticket

¹¹⁶ Of note, too, is that Robert Downey Jr. cites his conversations with Leslie Klinger, of the *Klinger v. Conan Doyle Estate* trial, as his method for learning about the Sherlock Holmes stories.

purchasing website, Downey Jr. and Law sit down for an interview together concerning *Sherlock Holmes*. Their affection for one another is evident in their body language and is reminiscent of their roles in the *Sherlock Holmes* franchise. Whether this affection is real or a performed role, the body language is telling. The men sit close together, with their knees almost touching. For the majority of the six-minute interview, Downey Jr. has his hand resting lightly on the back of Law's chair. When the interviewer asks the two actors about filming the action scenes, Downey Jr. laughs and casually embraces Law in a sideways hug. Law reciprocates this



Figure 3.2. Still image of Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law on *The Graham Norton Show*, 16 Dec. 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dOSYW_8jcQ.

affective embrace with large, sincere smiles directed at Downey Jr. They exhibit similar behavior in other interviews and promotional material; for example, fig. 3.2 shows Downey Jr. and Law on *The Graham Norton Show* displaying similar behavior to their interview with *Tribute Movies*. Much like their characters on screen, Downey Jr. and Law are not afraid to show affection with one another and their actions normalize such affection for viewers.¹¹⁷

As this case study demonstrates, the *Sherlock Holmes* franchise might be progressive in its attention affective, physical, and emotional relationships between men, but it nevertheless reinstates this idea of heterosexuality, rather than homosexuality, as the agreed-upon norm and expected relationship between two male-gendered characters. DeAngelis argues that the bromance is a “litmus test” for “discerning not only the extent to which homosexuality has been

¹¹⁷ A caveat needs to be made here regarding paratextual information. Both Downey Jr. and Law identify as heterosexual outside their roles of Holmes and Watson. Downey Jr. has been married to Susan Levin since 2005. Law, too, is married to a woman.

assimilated in contemporary culture but also the degree of comfort (or discomfort) that this culture actually experiences with such assimilated homosexuality” (14-15). Guy Ritchie’s films, I argue, show that Anglo-American society enjoys playing with the idea of homosexuality. My next case study takes this enjoyment one step further.

Case Study 3: Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat’s *Sherlock*

BBC’s *Sherlock* is the brainchild of British television and film entrepreneurs Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat. With the tagline “A new sleuth for the 21st Century,” Sherlock Holmes trolls twenty-first-century London with his right-hand man, doctor and Afghanistan veteran Dr. John Watson. Much like the Sherlock Holmes canon, *Sherlock* begins with John running into his old friend Stamford and John mentioning the need for a flatmate to afford a place in London. Stamford knows just the man: Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock and John’s subsequent introduction to one another and first night together as flatmates set the tone for the rest of the series. There is playful, sexual banter; intrigue and (oftentimes) murder; and London’s streets as their battleground. As discussed in my previous section regarding Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* franchise, Holmes belongs to London. BBC’s twenty-first-century *Sherlock* exhibits the same connection to London and distinct parallels exist between Victorian Holmes and his progeny. For example, Conan Doyle’s Baker Street Irregulars have morphed into Sherlock’s homeless network, which signals his familiarity with London’s streets and its inhabitants. London itself is a living, breathing entity as Sherlock and John ride and run through its streets. As Lynnette Porter points out, “*Sherlock* scenes in which the detective travels by taxi past famous landmarks or discovers clues at famous tourist destinations also allow audiences to vicariously visit London” (“Welcome to London” 173). This attention to London as a city blurs fiction and

reality, much like Conan Doyle's original creation. Choosing a modern London, moreover, separates Moffat and Gatiss' creation from both canon Holmes and other Neo-Victorian productions. While Guy Ritchie's Holmes and Watson are at times stilted in their bromance, for example, more room exists for liminal space and blurred gender roles with Sherlock and John.¹¹⁸ This more blatant transgression in male-male relationships is the subject of this case study.

As with their counterparts in Guy Ritchie's film franchise, Sherlock and John are demonstrably intimate with one another. On their first case together in "A Study in Pink" (S1E1), Sally Donovan, one of Inspector Gregson's sergeants, warns John that "You're not his friend. He doesn't have any friends." And, in truth, she is right: John and Sherlock's relationship develops into something that cannot be defined as simple "friendship." In a reversal to Ritchie's films, it is John who first tries to establish emotional intimacy with his new flatmate. In "Pink," Sherlock takes John to an Italian restaurant while they search for the murderous cabbie driver. The restaurant owner mistakenly assumes they are a couple, and while John's protestations are comical (and heteronormative), they are also a deep plunge into intimacy:

Restaurant owner: "On the house, for you and for your date."

Sherlock: "Do you want to eat?"

John: "I'm not his date."

Owner: "This man got me off a murder charge."

Sherlock: "This is Angelo. Three years ago I proved to Lestrade that at the time of a particularly vicious triple murder Angelo was in a completely different part of town, house-breaking."

Angelo: "He cleared my name."

Sherlock: "I cleared it a bit..."

[...]

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

¹¹⁸ There is one significant caveat to make here with this discussion of London. While London's modernity is a reflection of Sherlock's own use of technology to solve cases, it also acts as a prop to promote racial difference and inferiority. In "The Blind Banker" (S1E2), London's modernity is pitted against a Chinese gang that is distinctly labeled as inferior. In this episode, Sherlock hunts down a Chinese gang that utilizes ancient Chinese symbols spray painted on buildings and other structures to send messages and death threats. This depiction of Chinese gang activity is racist in its tone and is considered inferior to Holmes, who uses modern technology such as his cell phone to solve the case.

John: "I'm not his date!"
(Angelo still places candle on table)
[...]
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."
[...]
Sherlock: "John, umm...I think you should know that I consider myself married to my work, and while I'm flattered, I'm really not looking for any..."
John: "No, I'm...not asking. No."

Here, John's comments underscore the lessening of social stigmas regarding homosexuality in Anglo-American culture (DeAngelis 9). His need to reassure Sherlock that being gay will not affect John's impression of Sherlock works to de-stigmatize homosexuality. John's comments are also a bold move to establish intimacy with his brand-new flatmate. This intimacy engages with homosexuality openly and is the viewer's first glimpse at the sexual tensions that will soon come to characterize Sherlock and John's relationship. Akin to Ritchie's Holmes and Watson and their use of playful domestic pet names, Sherlock and John play with the idea of homosexuality as a way to appeal to a larger audience because they *could* be sexually involved while, here at least, maintaining the heterosexual norm.

By the third episode of Season 1, "The Great Game," Sherlock returns John's overtures for emotional intimacy with physical actions and these physical actions denote his growing emotional attachment to the doctor. When Jim Moriarty straps explosives to John and dangles the doctor in front of Sherlock at the pool house, Sherlock's primary concern is not engaging with Moriarty, his arch enemy,¹¹⁹ but getting the vest off John. When Moriarty finally leaves, Sherlock violently rips the vest off John and asks him, "Are you all right?" to which John

¹¹⁹ Please refer back to my second chapter for an in-depth analysis of the Moriarty-Sherlock relationship.

responds, “Yeah, yeah, I’m fine. I’m fine. Sherlock...Sherlock! [...] I’m glad no one saw that. You ripping my clothes off in a darkened swimming pool” (S1E3). While the final comment here can be interpreted as a comedic side comment to diffuse the tension, I would argue that it is instead John’s attempt to add humor and distract Sherlock, whose repetitive phrases of “Are you all right?” and his violence in ripping off the explosives vest expose how much he cares for John.

The most significant development in the bromance comes in “The Sign of Three” (S3E2), which centers on Mary and John’s wedding. The series built up to this moment, notably in “The Hounds of Baskerville” (S2E2), where Sherlock admits to John, “I don’t have friends. I’ve just got one.” This admission comes after Sherlock has broken John’s trust and faith because Sherlock used John as a test subject in the Baskerville labs. Later in Season 3, when John asks Sherlock to be his best man, John’s words are stifled with emotion and underscores his affection for Sherlock despite his partner’s antics: “The best man...For my wedding. I need a best man...Look, Sherlock, this is the biggest and most important day of my life...And I want to be up there with the two people that I love and care about most in the world...Mary Morstan...and...you.” When Sherlock gives his best man speech at John and Mary’s wedding, Sherlock reveals just how significant this role is to him:

My friend. John Watson. John...I’m afraid, John, I can’t congratulate you. All emotions, and in particular love, stand opposed to the pure cold reason I hold above all things. A wedding is, in my considered opinion, nothing short of a celebration of all that is false and specious and irrational and sentimental in this ailing and morally compromised world. Today we honour the deathwatch beetle that is the doom of our society and in time, one feels certain, our entire species...The point I’m trying to make is that I am the most unpleasant, rude, ignorant and all-round obnoxious arsehole that anyone could possibly have the misfortune to meet. I am dismissive of the virtuous, unaware of the beautiful, and uncomprehending in the face of the happy. So if I didn’t understand I was being asked to be best man, it is because I never expected to be anybody’s best friend. And certainly not the best friend of the bravest and kindest and wisest human being I have ever had the good fortune of knowing. John, I am a ridiculous man. Redeemed only by the warmth and constancy of your friendship. But as I am, apparently, your best friend, I cannot congratulate you on your choice of companion. Actually, now I can.

Mary, when I say you deserve this man, it is the highest compliment of which I am capable. John, you have endured war and injury and tragic loss...So know this. Today you sit between the woman you have made your wife and the man you have saved. In short, the two people who love you most in this world. And I know I speak for Mary as well when I say we will never let you down and we have a lifetime ahead to prove that.

This speech is wrought with emotion. Sherlock calls John his “friend” and admits, quite candidly, to his personal failings and how he never expected to have a best friend. Most significantly, Sherlock identifies his feeling for John as love. One cannot ignore the fact that this speech insinuates Sherlock into Mary and John’s wedding by making his best man’s speech into a tale of his and John’s work and making him a third party to the wedding vows (and that even extends to Sherlock deducing Mary’s pregnancy before either John or Mary themselves know about it). This speech is an homage to all the work Sherlock and John have accomplished during their time together and Sherlock perhaps feels justified in placing himself with Mary as “the two people who love [John] most in this world.” Sherlock’s promise at the end also foreshadows the enormous task he will face when Mary takes a bullet for Sherlock in Season 4.

Season 4 is a crucial point in Sherlock and John’s relationship because in its first episode, “The Six Thatchers,” Mary sacrifices herself to save Sherlock by diving in front of a bullet and dying in John’s arms at an aquarium. John is enraged, distraught, and blames Sherlock, telling his friend, “You made a vow. You swore.” John is referring to Sherlock’s speech at the wedding, where he swore to never let John down. John separates himself from Sherlock and tries to start a new life away from 221B Baker Street. “The Lying Detective” (S4E2) explores the dysfunctionality Sherlock and John experience as they try to live separate lives. Sherlock succumbs to cocaine, ostensibly to draw out Culverton Smith, a serial killer, but also because he

feels responsible for Mary's death. John, on the other hand, experiences hallucinations of Mary



Figure 3.3. Sherlock and John embracing after John's confession, personal screenshot.

and cannot cope with raising their baby by himself. When Mrs. Hudson finally brings Sherlock and John back together, instead of John instigating emotional intimacy, it is Sherlock. In a moment of vulnerability at 221B

Baker Street, John admits to Mary's ghost

(standing in the corner of the room) that he cheated on her because he sent intimate texts to another woman. Sherlock is the one who comforts John in this exchange, rather than the other way around:

Sherlock: You know, it's not my place to say, but it was just texting. People text. Even I text. Her, I mean. Woman.¹²⁰ Bad idea. Try not to, but, you know, sometimes...

[pauses]

Sherlock: It's not a pleasant thought, John, but I have this terrible feeling from time to time that we might all just be human.

John: Even you?

Sherlock: No. Even you.

Sherlock then embraces John as he cries, as shown in figure 3.3. As with Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* films, the bromance discourse here "appropriates cultural codes connected to homosexual bonding as a means of acknowledging the possibilities of homosocial bonding" (Becker 236). Both Holmes-Watson adaptations work towards this idea of an emotive, affective, and possibly sexual relationship which, on the one hand, promote close ties between men but, on the other hand, avoid open homosexuality.

¹²⁰Sherlock is referring to Irene Adler.

However, one significant deviation distinguishes *Sherlock* from the conventions of the bromance: there are no female alternatives to heterosexualize Sherlock and John. Mary dies in the aquarium and leaves John a single parent. In one sense, Mary's death does answer questions concerning women that arise in the bromance: "Is the bromance [genre] afraid of women? Does



Figure 3.4. Sherlock and John finish putting 221B Baker Street back together, personal screenshot

it set out to punish them?" The answer is not necessarily punishment but "[i]t does, however, respond to the threat of women's agency and their power to control...their men" (Forster 207). As discussed in my previous chapter, Mary Watson is powerful. She is physically strong, mentally

cunning, and fiercely protective of her husband and daughter. Her agency and power, while not vilified, do mean that she controls John (and, by extension, Sherlock). Such control makes her an active agent in the Sherlock-John relationship and distracts from the bromance's intimacy. Thus, Mary's death is a response to her agency. The only other woman whose presence could heterosexualize the Sherlock-John relationship is Irene Adler, or "the woman" as she is known in the canonic texts. Her role in "A Scandal in Belgravia" (S2E1), however, only momentarily throws Sherlock's asexuality into question. Adler admits to John that she is gay but also in love with (or at least enthralled with) Sherlock.¹²¹ However, Adler quickly flees the scene after Sherlock rescues her from decapitation in the Middle East and she does not make another appearance in the series. Without this female "motivating force" (DeAngelis 12), viewers can read Sherlock and John as not just two men in a bromance, but as a homosexual couple.

¹²¹ One could also identify Irene Adler as pansexual. According to GLADD, "While being bisexual means being attracted to more than one gender, being pansexual means being attracted to all gender identities, or attracted to people regardless of gender." Adler's emphasis on Sherlock's intelligence as a deciding factor in her attraction to him. <https://www.bustle.com/p/what-does-it-mean-to-be-pansexual-we-asked-expert-heres-what-they-said-8227460>

This lack of a female “motivating force” shifts the bromance away from its standard formula. Gatiss and Moffat test the boundaries of what it means to have a bromance between two male companions and, in the end, Sherlock and John create their own household complete with a baby daughter. I interpret this ending as a challenge to the bromance’s definitive assertion that “bros in the bromantic comedy *must* identify as heterosexual” (Forster 192). That heterosexuality gives the bromance purpose per Peter Forster’s analysis,

The meaning and purpose of the bromantic comedy reside in the unseating of any queerness from the narrative resolution only to insist, finally, unequivocally, upon traditional masculinity and the ongoing – but culturally endorsed – tribulations of heterosexuality. (210)

Sherlock and John’s relationship does not find that unequivocal endorsement of traditional masculinity. Instead, Sherlock and John’s relationship is nonheteronormative because it is two men living together and raising a child. The implication here is that the idea of “family” is “fluid and situational,” making “*Sherlock*’s family one of the queerest, free-form TV families yet to appear on television” (Jencson 153).

I posit that the ending of the series, “The Final Problem” (S4E3), actively and assertively queers the Sherlock-John relationship because it is not heteronormative, which signals its break from the bromance. To once again refer back to Max Kirsch’s argument regarding queer theory, the activity of queering is the reinterpretation of characters to deconstruct historical analyses (33). Moffat and Gatiss queer the ending to *Sherlock* and deconstruct the homosocial relationship. Once Sherlock, Mycroft, and John finish with Eurus, the last Holmes sibling, Sherlock and John return to 221B Baker Street to put their lives back together (see figure 4). A disc arrives for them from Mary while the two men are putting their flat back in order. In it, she pleads with Sherlock and John to continue their lives together:

I know you two. And if I’m gone, I know what you could become... There is a last

refuge for the desperate, the unloved, the persecuted. There is a final court of appeal for everyone. When life gets too strange, too impossible, too frightening, there is always one last hope. When all else fails, there are two men sitting, arguing in a scruffy flat, like they've always been there and they always will. The best and wisest men I have ever known, my Baker Street boys.

Mary gives Sherlock and John the mandate to live and work together. Images flashing across the screen of Sherlock and John together support such a mandate: taking on cases, meeting with Mrs. Hudson, visiting with Lestrade; and, most significantly, raising baby Rosie together.

Therefore, I argue that BBC's *Sherlock* is the most transgressive of the Sherlock Holmes adaptations that maintain the male-male relationship. I assert that this bromance is meant to be queered, which DeAngelis argues is possible with a bromance: "bromance certainly opens up a space for queer readings of heterosexual characters and their homosocial relationships, especially if queer readings are defined as what queer scholar Alexander Doty has identified as nonheteronormative readings that may be adopted by viewers of any sexual orientation" (24). Viewers can adopt any view they like: Sherlock and John as a permanent bromance sans Mary Watson; Sherlock and John as co-parents; or even Sherlock and John as a homosexual couple raising their child. Sherlock and John's ending is nonheteronormative and gives audiences the ability to think of the two men as either engaged in a bromance or a homosexual life partnership.

Case Study 4: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Ana Waterhouse's *Mycroft Holmes* (2015)

Mycroft Holmes first appears in "The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter" (1893). Sherlock Holmes describes his elder brother as having "better powers of observation" but "no ambition and no energy. He will not even go out of his way to verify his own solutions, and would rather be considered wrong than take the trouble to prove himself right." Dr. Watson notes this laziness in his descriptions of Mycroft's physicality, "Mycroft Holmes was a much larger

and stouter man than Sherlock. His body was absolutely corpulent” (Conan Doyle 407). Mycroft Holmes’s eccentricities are an almost comical over exaggeration of Sherlock’s own peculiarities. Mycroft is the co-founder of the Diogenes Club, which Sherlock describes as “the queerest club in London” that contains “the most unsociable and unclubbable men in town” (Conan Doyle 407). Whereas Sherlock Holmes enjoys operatic productions and possesses social skills sufficient to interact with both John Watson and society in general, Mycroft Holmes disdains such conventions. This representation of Mycroft Holmes leaves an abundance of unanswered questions: why is Mycroft so antisocial? How did he come to found the Diogenes Club? Why does he not exert himself to utilize his deductive skills in the same manner as his younger brother? Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse answer just those questions.

Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse overturn conventional Sherlock Holmes adaptation trends by (almost) completely disregarding¹²² the character of Sherlock himself. Mycroft Holmes introduces himself to the reader as a creature starkly different from the canon: “His position as secretary to the Secretary of State for War was sound, placing his career on an upward path. His monthly stipend was more than adequate, his future promotions certain. Most important, after a full year’s engagement, he was still madly and passionately in love with the prettiest, most intelligent, kindest woman in the world” (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 15). Set in Victorian London, *Mycroft Holmes* follows the adventures of the twenty-three-year-old secretary and his forty-year-old Trinidad-born friend and cigar shop proprietor, Cyrus Douglas. Rumors of missing and murdered children in Trinidad have reached Douglas and he and Mycroft set sail for

¹²² Sherlock Holmes makes brief appearances in this novel. For example, before Mycroft sets out for Trinidad, he visits young Sherlock at the Royal College of St. Peter. Sherlock is cold and aloof, more concerned with the case of William Sheward, a sailor who brutally murdered and dismembered his wife, than with Mycroft’s attempts to say good-bye.

the British colony¹²³ to investigate these rumors. This novel's significance comes not only from its fleshing out of Mycroft Holmes as a character but also from its exploration of the homosocial bond from the position of the buddy-cop narrative. Through the union of a *white* Mycroft Holmes and a *black* Cyrus Douglas, Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse explore how racial prejudices and inequalities foster a deeper homosocial bond between two male protagonists utilizing the conventions of the buddy-copy dynamic.

The buddy-cop narrative follows “the buddy politic” as defined by Cynthia Fuchs in Steven Cohan and Ina Rae Hark’s *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* (1993). Through the “erasure of racial differences via bonds formed during episodes of explosive penetration, the buddy film works to disguise the homoeroticism always implicit in its formulaic structure” (Cohan and Hark 6). In other words, by ignoring the politics of race between two male companions, the buddy-cop film, or, in this case novel, in turn negates any sort of homoeroticism in the homosocial bond. Fuchs posits that the “buddy movie” creates a male-male bond that “typically collapses intramasculine differences by effecting an uncomfortable sameness, a transgression of boundaries between self and other, inside and outside, legitimate and illicit” (194). To demonstrate this point, Fuchs uses a variety of examples, such as Mel Brooks and Danny Glover in *Lethal Weapon*. This bond fluctuates along Eve Sedgwick’s heterosexual-homosexual continuum and “contains initial axes of racial, generational, political, and ethnic difference under a collective performance of extraordinary virility” (Fuchs 194-95). Fuchs’s characterization of the buddy politic describes the Mycroft-Douglas relationship, which intersects with these axes and ultimately transgresses boundaries to

¹²³ This removal from London is another way Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse break down the canon and its white, hegemonic masculinity. By taking Mycroft away from London and reducing the city’s significance, *Mycroft Holmes* prioritizes Douglas and his experiences, rather than the reverse.

create this sense of “sameness” in the midst of intense, virile violence that ultimately results in wealth for the two men and the death of Georgiana Sutton, Mycroft’s fiancé. However, there is one key difference: for Fuchs, the buddy-cop duo and its political implications are untenable and “can only implode” (195) in the end. Such is not the case in *Mycroft Holmes*. The two men return to London together richer than when they left, their bond stronger than ever.

Racial tensions in *Mycroft Holmes* are not subtle and clearly align Mycroft and Douglas against predominant racial constructs in Victorian society. These tensions both reinforce and deflect homosexual innuendos while simultaneously erasing racial differences between the two men to create a transgressive sameness. For example, in Chapter 2 Mycroft and Douglas show too much familiarity towards each other (Douglas claps Mycroft on the back in a sign of affection) while watching a rowing competition between Cambridge and Oxford, implying that they are “chums” (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 26) rather than employer and manservant, the only acceptable social relationship between a black man and a white one in Victorian London. A group of drunk, rowdy men take offense to this friendliness, and set upon the two friends. Mycroft and Douglas escape atop Mycroft’s horse, Abie, and here the reader sees his/her first instance of this “physical sameness” that transgresses racial boundaries. After Douglas blacks out from a beer bottle to the head, Mycroft steadies his friend “with his knees”; and, once they are repositioned, Mycroft’s body retains this close contact to Douglas’s own body: “His left hand on the reins, his knees still clenching Douglas on either side, Holmes reached into his breast pocket with his right hand, and pulled out his pocket watch” (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 28). This physical contact can be read as erotic and, at the very least, contains sexual innuendos as it emphasizes Mycroft’s thighs against Douglas’s limp body. However, the “extraordinary virility” of Mycroft’s actions eclipses the homoeroticism. Mycroft saves both himself and Douglas from

the mob by masterfully guiding his horse down London's streets, eventually turning onto St. Giles just as the women release their buckets of slop. Mycroft times his horse's pace perfectly so that he and Douglas are unsullied and the pursuers drenched in filth (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 31). This triumph of mental and physical fortitude reestablishes Mycroft's masculinity and negates any sort of homoeroticism.

This racial divide between Mycroft and Douglas is further developed during their journey to Trinidad aboard the *Sultana*. Until they reach international waters, Douglas is not welcome as an equal in the dining room and Douglas feels this inequality. Douglas is acutely aware of his "darker hue" and his physical profile contrasted to that of Mycroft: "[O]ne hundred eyes, all critical of a tall, somber black man in his middle years, who – though he might be staring humbly at the floor – seemed too self-possessed to be a servant. Especially since he stood next to a young man of no more than three-and-twenty" (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 113). This racism is more overt when Mycroft and Douglas encounter an elderly woman whose reactions to the two men play into Victorian racial divides. When she sees Mycroft, the woman "smile[s] a hello"; when she catches a glimpse of Douglas, she "clutche[s] possessively at a plum-sized black pendant" around her neck. In defiance, Mycroft tells the woman, "He is not interested in your jewel, madam...He has two of his own – larger, I am sure, and much more dear to him!" (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 93). Mycroft makes vocal what his hectic ride through the London streets only implied: his awareness of Douglas's physical body. This explicitly sexual remark, like Mycroft's knees holding Douglas in place on the horse, creates a link between Mycroft and Douglas and the male body. And, again like the race through London's streets, another scene of brutal violence re-orientes readers to Mycroft and Douglas's virility and distracts from this sexual sameness. On their way to their cabin after encountering the racist, jewel-clutching woman,

Mycroft and Douglas are set upon by four ruffians. Mycroft gives one man an upper cut and roundhouse kick while Douglas breaks an assailant's nose and nails the leader with a throat punch (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 102-103). These instances of virile violence negate homoeroticism and align with Fuchs' argument that the buddy-cop genre creates narratives that rely on resolution through partners "triumphantly detonating all villains and nearby vehicles" (195). While the language in Fuchs's comment is anachronistic, Mycroft and Douglas nevertheless triumph over their antagonists at the racial axis and they become one bodily unit against the villains. Mycroft and Douglas redirect the reader's attention away from their physical, homosexual language and instead towards discussions of race and racial tensions.

An ethnic difference further complements this handling of racial difference. Douglas is a native of Trinidad, and understands the customs, rituals, and culture of this population. Mycroft is a thoroughly white middle-class British man. This sharp divide becomes clear when Douglas explains his news about the missing Trinidad children to Mycroft in Chapter 4; Douglas must lecture his friend about the legends of the *lougrou* and *douen*, the demons believed to be responsible for the disappearing children. Mycroft notes that these demons are "impractical" and dismisses such superstitions outright (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 40-41). Despite this clear divide between the two regarding something as fundamental as a belief system, Mycroft and Douglas are inseparable and respect this difference. These racial and ethnic differences serve as both physical and mental boundaries between the two friends; however, these differences do not hinder Mycroft's and Douglas's loyalty to one another. Rather, as Fuchs points out, this division yet again unites the two men against adversarial circumstances.

In short, the potential barriers between Mycroft and Douglas, including their disparities in age, create cohesion rather than disunion. This constant revival of Mycroft-Douglas as a

cohesive unit against Victorian societal and cultural expectations creates the sameness that Fuchs identifies as part of buddy-cop relationships. This sameness is at times uncomfortable and creates “a transgression of boundaries between self and other” (Fuchs 194). Mycroft and Douglas’s awareness of each other creates this transgressive sameness. Their adventures in Trinidad are physically and emotionally violent, and Mycroft often draws attention to Douglas’s injuries in a passionate, emotive manner. For example, when Adam McGuire (the mastermind behind the new slavery ring) takes Douglas hostage, Mycroft’s concern for his friend’s injuries is simultaneously physically and emotionally descriptive: “Both [Douglas’s] eyes were swollen nearly shut, and his lower lip was split...Yet what struck [Mycroft] like a sledgehammer was to see his friend with his head bowed low...It wasn’t submission...but it could be a sign of a concussion, perhaps even cranial damage that was beyond repair (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 342). This reflection is fraught with emotion, from the reference to a sledgehammer to the phrase “his friend.” Clearly Mycroft’s feelings for Douglas run deep. The same can be said for Douglas regarding Mycroft. For example, after Mycroft and Douglas learn of Georgiana’s lies regarding her family estates in Trinidad, Douglas is surprised “at how morose he felt, how out of sorts. It was more than the sorrow one might experience when a dear friend is betrayed. It seemed to him that he was taking [Mycroft’s] heartbreak personally.” Furthermore, Douglas acknowledges that his attraction to Mycroft is unfathomable: “he enjoyed [Mycroft’s] company. But he had never quite known what to make of this good-looking, brilliant young man, so very British in bearing, pedigree, and character, who somehow found pleasure in the friendship of a forty-year-old native of Trinidad” (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 220, 117). Even this description cannot escape an attention to physicality, with Douglas noting Mycroft’s good looking and British characteristics. This attention to male bodies, both physically and emotionally, creates a sameness between

Mycroft and Douglas, which in turn allows for male bonding (Fuchs 201). In short, their relationship supersedes culturally-accepted boundaries and effects a sense of sameness between the two men, particularly in contrast to Georgiana's relationship with Mycroft.

The physical and at times homoerotic closeness between Mycroft and Douglas remains unfulfilled in part due to Mycroft's obsession with Georgiana. Mycroft's obvious romantic passion (a very anti-Sherlockian trait in itself) again reflects back to the buddy-cop conventions. This genre often heterosexualizes its homosocial protagonists through "ex-wives or girl friends who die on-screen" (Fuchs 196). (Not unlike Mary Watson's role in BBC's *Sherlock*.) Georgiana fulfills this role. Mycroft's feelings towards Georgiana are almost nauseatingly romantic. While Mycroft is always "tender" with Georgiana, "treating her as if she were made of the finest crystal and liable to shatter at any moment" (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 122-123), Mycroft's familiarity and comfort with Douglas's body stands in sharp contrast to the secretary's uncomfortableness around his own fiancé. Mycroft admits to himself that Georgiana "unnerve[s] him" and he becomes overly conscious of both his physical body and hers when they are in close proximity (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 54). These comments underscore that, while Mycroft may repudiate ideologies of race, he buys into ideologies of gender and treats middle- and upper-class women as fragile, angelic creatures. By contrast, after Douglas suffers multiple gunshot wounds during a battle with the new slave ring, Mycroft "rip[s] open his friend's shirt and with his thumb" begins to feel around Douglas's chest to take stock of the injuries (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 362).¹²⁴ This close physical contact is more than Mycroft ever shared with Georgiana, and this intimacy is perhaps best illustrated by Mycroft's personal vigil over Douglas once they reach a hospital in Port of Spain: "Holmes paid for a comfortable room, along with

¹²⁴ Mycroft's actions here also closely parallel those of Sherlock in the pool house after Jim Moriarty leaves John strapped in the comb-laced jacket.

twice-daily visits from a well-regarded local physician...[and] kept a personal vigil and left his friend's bedside only when strictly necessary" (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 370). The existence of Mycroft's *female* fiancé neutralizes his physical contact and comfortableness with a *male* body, placing the Mycroft-Douglas relationship further away from homosexuality on Sedgwick's continuum.

As a continuation of Georgiana's significance to the buddy-cop narrative, Mycroft sets off for Trinidad not only to help Douglas, but also because Georgiana decides to travel independently to Trinidad. (She too hails from Trinidad, with the significant difference that her family came as indentured workers who eventually won their independence and set up a prosperous cotton plantation, whereas Douglas is from a small seaside village). In Trinidad, Mycroft and Douglas learn that Georgiana lied about her family and, worse, that Georgiana herself is part of the gang abducting Merikens and forcing them back into slavery. As previously stated, Fuchs notes that the buddy-cop frame arose from "the political advent of sex and race issues," specifically omitting women so that men could fulfill relationships with one another (196). I argue that Georgiana's betrayal is therefore inevitable. She must betray Mycroft for two reasons: first, because her association with the new slave ring alienates her from Mycroft and specifically Douglas while simultaneously drawing Mycroft and Douglas closer together. And second, Georgiana is an exchangeable object, per Sedgwick's homosocial analysis. Women, in a homosocial setting, serve "the primary purpose of cementing relationships with other men" (Sedgwick 123). Georgiana's betrayal (and, in fact, Douglas's wife's death ten years earlier) solidifies the bond between Douglas and Mycroft. This transaction, as Sedgwick terms it, legitimizes modern laws and gender "arrangements" on "firmly male-homosocial terms" (137). In other words, to overcome potentially alienating axes, Mycroft and Douglas quite literally

create a homosocial relationship over the “dead, discredited” (Sedgwick 137) body of Georgiana.¹²⁵ So, in the end, the male duo successfully solves the case: they uncover the slavery ring, overcome Georgiana’s betrayal, and return to London in triumph.

As a last reflection on Georgiana’s death, Douglas is the one who accompanies Mycroft back to London at the novel’s end to meet Queen Victoria, not the fiancé. Mycroft dresses Douglas for this occasion, selecting a “double-breasted waistcoat with a turnover of quilted silk and an overcoat trimmed in fur”; in response, Douglas comments that he looks like “an Ethiopian princeling” (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 386). Selecting clothing is a domestic chore and reminiscent of a Victorian wife’s duties, and this act shifts the ending away from Fuchs’s buddy-cop frame. Instead of imploding as Fuchs argues must happen in the buddy-cop film (195), *Mycroft Holmes* ends with a blurring of heterosexual boundaries between Mycroft and Douglas. This blurring is not dissimilar to BBC *Sherlock*’s final season, which also removes Mary Watson, the character meant to dispel homosexuality and re-instill heterosexuality between Sherlock and John. Thus, these two male-male relationships create a playful ending open to the viewer’s individual interpretation.

I chose to include Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse’s novel because it highlights and challenges engrained structures in the Sherlock Holmes canon. First, *Mycroft Holmes* exemplifies how some adaptations prioritize challenges to norms in the canon itself, such as two male protagonists, or, in this case, *white* male protagonists. By creating an adaptation that privileges racial discussions, Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse challenge racial prejudices and stereotypes that pervade Conan Doyle’s original texts. The exact setting of Trinidad, specifically,

¹²⁵ As a side comment: Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse set up Georgiana’s betrayal as the source of the canonical Mycroft Holmes’s aversion to romance. After Georgiana’s death, Mycroft scorns the “silly notion” of “*happily ever after*” (Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse 337). This revelation turns Mycroft’s sole purpose to rescuing Cyrus, who has been shot by Adam McGuire, the ringleader of Georgiana’s underground slave business.

comes from Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's childhood. As he tells Leslie Klinger in an interview for Los Angeles Review of Books, "My grandfather emigrated to the U.S. in 1917, so [the Trinidad setting] is really our history." Here, then, is an author of color who appropriates the Sherlock Holmes canon to diversify its content, setting, and characters based on his own history. This change is particularly transgressive given how the canonic Sherlock Holmes utilizes his powers of observation and deduction to perpetuate racial stereotypes, which I examined with my analysis of "The Sign of the Four" in my first chapter. Second, *Mycroft Holmes* works to expand the Sherlock Holmes canon's established, but under-explored, characters. *Mycroft Holmes* creates a sympathetic, caring, and good-natured protagonist that stands in stark contrast to other Mycroft Holmes recreations, such that of Mark Gatiss (BBC's *Sherlock*), whose Mycroft is particularly ruthless and coldhearted, or Rhys Ifans (CBS's *Elementary*), an aspiring chef-turned-secret agent, or even Stephen Fry from *Game of Shadows*, who rambles naked around his mansion and is a comical, bumbling character. To complement this change, *Mycroft Holmes* contains a Sherlock Holmes who is altogether unlikeable and alienating, an interpretation likely to throw off Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts, who are accustomed to seeing a Sherlock Holmes who is any combination of an attractive, tortured, or captivating protagonist in new adaptations. Such a change is perhaps a necessary choice for Abdul-Jabbar and Waterhouse, as creating a sympathetic or enjoyable Sherlock Holmes would steer the reader away from the Mycroft-Cyrus bond and its revision of racial commentary in the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Cast Study 5: Bill Condon's *Mr. Holmes* (2015)

Bill Condon's *Mr. Holmes* is an adaptation of *A Slight Trick of the Mind* by Mitch

Cullin.¹²⁶ In this film, Sherlock Holmes (Sir Ian McKellen) lives in the English countryside with his housekeeper Mrs. Munro (Laura Linney) and her young son Roger (Milo Parker). The year is 1947 and Holmes is 93 years old; his body is stiff, old, and his mind is suffering from senility. Holmes befriends Roger and teaches him the art of beekeeping while Holmes tries to regain his memories regarding his last case, the conclusion of which sent him into this beekeeper exile 35 years prior. The case involved a Mrs. Kelmont, her husband, and their dead children. To aid his memory, Holmes travels to Japan at the request of Tamiki Umezaki (Hiroyuki Sanada), who hopes that the Japanese prickly ash plant is the key to reducing senility. In the end, Holmes remembers the Kelmont case not because the prickly ash works, but because of Roger's friendship. This film is rife with themes worthy of study: there is Mrs. Munro's need to help both herself and Roger remember her husband, who died in World War II; the depiction of Japan after World War II and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; and the relationship between middle and lower classes in post-war Britain. Here, I will examine two specific points of study that deal with masculinity. The first is the breakdown of Victorian masculinity in the aging body of Sherlock Holmes. Thus, I examine the film rather than Cullin's book because McKellen's portrayal of Holmes's senility creates a persuasive and visceral image of what it means to age. The second point is ageism and its relationship to masculine norms and stereotypes.¹²⁷ Although twenty-first-century social and cultural attitudes towards sexualities, nonheteronormative gender roles, and racial differences co-exist and find space in popular culture, the same cannot be said for the taboo of ageism. Condon's *Mr. Holmes* challenges such taboos and promotes an

¹²⁶ Published in 2005, Cullin's book examines the nonagenarian Sherlock Holmes in his quest to find the prickly ash plant of Japan to heal his forgetful mind. As Holmes ages in Sussex with his housekeeper and son, people continue to reach out to him for answers to their problems. Holmes is drawn back into the case of Mrs. Keller and his unacknowledged infatuation of her. The book focuses on Holmes embracing emotions he ignored or pushed away as a detective.

¹²⁷ This analysis harkens back to my second chapter and my analysis of Mrs. Hudson from BBC's *Sherlock*.

empathetic picture of what it means to grow old.

As discussed in my first chapter, the Victorian masculine identity “was inseparable from the totality of gender and social relations” (Mallett 153) and shaped cultural and social norms for men as well as women. While masculinity was often contradictory,¹²⁸ the ideal middle-class man strove for “self-control, self-discipline, and the absence of emotional expression” (Walkowitz 17) and such a man committed himself to work and industry (Dell and Losey 11). Conan Doyle firmly believed in these masculine ideals, and Sherlock Holmes represents this author’s

commitment to “moderniz[e] and strength[en] the representation of British manhood to match the directives of more secular, scientific and empire-



Figure 3.5. Sherlock Holmes in 1912 on the left; Sherlock Holmes in 1947 on the right, personal screenshot

conscious culture” (Barsham 1). Holmes, often with John Watson, takes on cases that involve masculine language (“the language of reason, government and administration – the language of realism” [R. Allen 119]) and an active lifestyle. However, in Condon’s film, Holmes’s body is no longer that described by Watson or that of the virile middle-class man. Figure 3.5 illustrates the difference between Holmes in 1912, a time when he still resided in London and experienced success and prestige as a detective, and Holmes in 1947, during his retirement and his fight with his aging body. Per figure 3.5, Holmes is no longer the lithe, hawk-nosed figure of Sidney

¹²⁸ Please refer back to my first chapter and its discussion of the nuances in masculinity, such as the thriving but ignored homosexual community.

Paget,¹²⁹ but rather a frail, elderly man at the end of his life. The detective's eyes are no longer "sharp and piercing" (Conan Doyle 8) and he stands no longer at six feet tall, but stooped. Moreover, Holmes's senility means that he has lost control over his language and the order he instills with such language. For example, he writes the names of people he wishes to remember on the cuff of his shirts because he cannot even remember the names of his most intimate companions. So, when Roger asks Holmes if they are going to the beach to swim or not (Holmes has completely forgotten and Roger was waiting outside for hours), Holmes checks his cuff and tells the young boy, "All right, Roger. You go along. I'll catch up." This phrase represents Holmes's inability to master his language and his sense of self.

Reminders of who he once was surround Holmes: Tamiki Umezaki inquires after Holmes's deerstalker hat; John Watson's stories reside in Holmes's study and are made into motion pictures (one of which Holmes attends); and Roger himself asks Holmes to "do the trick" (meaning Holmes's ratiocination) on more than one occasion. These instances prove that one's sense of self "is not something we are born with...but something socially produced through the narratives people use to make sense of and understand their lives"; in short, we tell one another stories about ourselves in order to create a sense of self (Jackson 39). Holmes admits this insecurity over Mrs. Kelmont's case to Roger in a fit of anger:

Because it was my last case! And if I'd brought it to a successful conclusion, I wouldn't have left the profession and spent 35 years here, in this place, away from the world! I chose exile for my punishment, but what was it for? I must've done something terribly wrong, and I've no evidence of what it was. Only pain, guilt, useless, worthless feelings!

Sherlock Holmes *knows* that he is a great detective, but through John Watson's stories and a knowledge that he *should* be able to make deductions. He *knows* that he should remember every

¹²⁹ "A Scandal in Bohemia" began and a long and fruitful partnership between Arthur Conan Doyle and Sidney Paget, whose visual depictions of Sherlock Holmes created the gaunt, tall, and lithe figure so well-recognized in the original Sherlock Holmes publications.

single detail of Mrs. Kelmont's case. However, Holmes's senility prevents him from actively using that intellect and he therefore loses himself.

Holmes's senility brings together the breakdown of Victorian masculinity and what it means to "age" in Anglo-American society. As David Jackson notes in his *Exploring Aging Masculinities: The Body, Sexuality and Social Lives* (2016), despite the privileges that come from a male body, most aging men must face ageism and stereotyping "as well as bodily and sexual deterioration and fragmentation" (3). This fragmentation crosses racial, sexual, and even generational lines.¹³⁰ As Jackson asserts:

...there is still great variety in some aging men's reactions to these shifting experiences. Some aging men still cling defensively to traditional forms of manhood, and other men are blocked by depression, alcoholism, violence, addictive behaviours or damaging illness. But for other aging men there are new spaces emerging, created by the deconstruction and disruption of normative understanding of masculinity. (4).

McKellen's Holmes is faced with just such a challenge: does he become an old, embittered man entrenched in masculinity he can no longer fulfill, or does he adapt his understanding of masculinity to attain happiness in his last few years of life? *Mr. Holmes* follows McKellen's Holmes as he navigates his makes this shift.

Holmes initially tries science (or, perhaps, pseudo-science) to regain his memory. He first turns to Royal Jelly from his beehive and then to the Japanese prickly ash plant to aid his memory. The audience learns that Holmes has written a monograph, entitled "The Value of Royal Jelly with Further Comments from the Potential Benefits of Prickly Ash," that outlines the benefits from these two sources to alleviate degenerative illnesses, including senility. However, neither the Royal Jelly nor the prickly ash help Holmes remember who is he and the outcome of Mrs. Kelmont's case. Instead, as Holmes's senility becomes increasingly worse, he comes to

¹³⁰ However, given the subject matter of *Mr. Holmes*, I am discussing aging men through the example of a heteronormative, white man.

represent how men manage “the interaction between disability and masculinities” in aging lives (Jackson 89). Holmes must now negotiate new territories and coping mechanisms to help him remember every day matters as well as his past casework, many of which are either frustrating or futile. For example, Holmes’s doctor gives him a calendar notebook with the instructions to make a dot every time he does not remember a name or place on that specific date. Later, when Holmes faints after attempting to inject cocaine, the doctor returns and opens the notebook to see the last few pages almost completely black with dots. Holmes, the representation of Victorian masculinity and scientific rationality, now lives in a disabled body that cannot perform on his command; in this context, an aging man’s disabled body becomes a contested site “where multiple meanings, identities, and discourses are in dynamic conflict with each other” (Jackson 92). When both the Royal Jelly and prickly ash fail Holmes, he must seek out alternative methods to remember his life. Roger is ultimately the key to Holmes not only remembering the end to Mrs. Kelmont’s case, but to adapting to his current mental condition.

The canonic Sherlock Holmes’s inability to form significant emotional bonds again makes its appearance in Condon’s film. The homosocial relationship with Watson is Holmes’s deepest connection, but as I mentioned in my introduction and will discuss in my fourth chapter, the Holmes-Watson relationship is static. Victorian masculinity encouraged intimate relationships between men, but the idea of masculine stoicism and attention to work curtailed emotive expressions. Holmes’s relationship with Roger upends the canonic Holmes’s self-control because Condon’s Holmes needs Roger to not only remember Mrs. Kelmont’s case, but to find a way to navigate this new life with senility. Holmes shares Mrs. Kelmont’s story with Roger and discusses his memories with the young boy. Each time Holmes opens up to Roger, he remembers a little bit more, which he admits to his young companion, “The Prickly Ash hasn’t

made a bit of difference to my memory any more than the royal jelly did. Yes...The only inspiration for any sort of recollections has been you.” While Watson was often by Holmes’s side, the doctor was (most often than not) not a necessity to the deductions or solving a case. However, Roger’s companionship is the conduit to Holmes’s last case. Holmes must abandon his disdain for society and companionship in order to negotiate his new identity. The man who once represented Victorian emotional self-control breaks down crying in front of Mrs. Munro once Roger is hospitalized after an attack from a wasp nest, “I care about Roger! I care about him very much.” Holmes then falls to the ground, sobbing and mourning Roger’s attack.

Holmes’s senility breaks down “the masculine illusion of solidity and rational control of many men’s more ordered lives” (Jackson 95). This exploration of senility also brings up ableism and how it intersects with the study of gerontology, which is the study of old age, aging, and challenges facing the elderly. In the past, Western gerontology has identified “successful aging” for men as “synonymous with the continuing performance of sexuality” and heteronormativity; this frame of reference, in turn, marginalizes those who do not fit into a heterosexual norm (Sandberg and Marshall 3). This heteronormativity, additionally, must be coupled with “able-bodiedness and able-mindedness to produce visions of a successful aging future (Sandberg and Marshall 5). This Sherlock Holmes does not fit into this mold. Specifically, his dementia is a threat to successful aging. While Holmes does not necessarily challenge the narrative of hetero-happiness, his disabilities bring up challenges to the prerequisites for aging “well” in Western society (Sandberg and Marshall 7). Thus, Holmes’s happy ending with Roger and Mrs. Munro and his newfound memory challenge ableism and ableism as a successful sign of aging well in Western society.

Therefore, Condon's Sherlock Holmes is a comment on cultural ageism, which "focuses on the undervaluing of aging men's lives through taken for granted representations and narratives" (Jackson 8). Aging men are not "passive, static, embodied subjects" (Jackson 53). Instead, as Holmes demonstrates to audiences, they are complex characters coming to terms with the loss of their masculinity and confronting choices they must make in order to make sense of their new bodies. Moreover, Holmes rejects dominant forms of masculinity, and particularly those masculine constructs that have defined his life. At the very end of the film, Roger leaves Holmes setting up a series of round stones, each one representing a departed soul. He is performing the same ritual he observed at a memorial to the Hiroshima attack when he visited Tamiki Umezaki. Holmes kneels in the grass, gently placing these stones in a circle around him. This reverence and respect for a Japanese ceremony stands in stark contrast to Holmes's racial prejudices in the Sherlock Holmes canon. Per my first chapter, Holmes and Watson's role in the panopticon as embodiments of British masculinity includes creating a divide between the Anglo-Saxon man and the Oriental "Other." These key shifts in Holmes's masculinity creates an entirely new character, one different from the detective in "A Study in Scarlet" and perhaps the better for that change.

I would like to posit here that ageism is perhaps the last frontier in twenty-first-century re-evaluations of gender and sexuality. *Mr. Holmes* breaks down masculinity and exposes its vulnerabilities. In the end, McKellen's Sherlock Holmes, not dissimilar to Mrs. Hudson in BBC's *Sherlock*, promotes a more nuanced depiction of age that breaks down stereotypes to craft a perspective that is empathetic, complex, and, in the end, inspirational. McKellen's Sherlock Holmes finds a new and fulfilling life for himself with Roger and Mrs. Munro.

Conclusion

The texts under discussion in this chapter represent an interesting development in adaptation studies: reworkings of a canonic British author promote an understanding of masculinity as a plurality instead of a monolithic, hegemonic social norm. This “changeable continuum” (Horlacher 10) creates room for not just emotive, affective male-male relationships but also interracial bonds. Thus, these adaptations challenge homosociality and Victorian masculinity as originally embodied in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes canon. Each partnership, whether between a Holmes and his Watson or Holmes and his Douglas, or even an elderly Holmes and his young friend Roger, challenges the traditional orthodoxy of masculinity. And yet, these relationships alienate and marginalize women in a manner similar to that of the homosocial bond. These adaptations are therefore complicated: while they are first more progressive than the homosocial bond between Conan Doyle’s Holmes and Watson, they remain stifled by Anglo-American society’s reliance on heteronormativity as a general rule. Thus, given the detective genre’s reciprocal relationship with popular culture, I would argue that it is safe to hypothesize that these adaptations represent larger trends in Anglo-American society towards more affective relationships between and among men.

This discussion circles back to my first chapter, which gave attention to the incongruencies inherent in Victorian cultural codes regarding masculinity and homosocial relationships. These post-2010 adaptations of the Sherlock Holmes canon emphasize that such inconsistencies still plague the construction of masculinity and even masculinities; for example, “[e]ven though the bromance usually takes a comedic approach to the issues that bedevil men of the moment, it represents a merger, a compromise, an attempt to paper the cracks in the façade of [Anglo-American] male stability. In other words, masculinity is founded on instability and a

repressive lockdown of all knowledge of this instability” (Greven 80). While this hypothesis of plural masculinities acknowledges and even embraces this instability, the need to instill comedic humor and deflect homosexual tensions rather than explore what happens when a male-male relationship becomes sexual underscores the depth of this lockdown. Robert Downey Jr.’s use of drag, for example, and Martin Freeman’s comedic side remarks about two men in a darkened swimming pool are humorous and enjoyable but perhaps also serve the bigger purpose of refusing to face and discuss homosexuality outright.

I mentioned in the conclusion of my previous chapter that adaptations of secondary characters in the Sherlock Holmes canon disrupt hegemonic and oppressive aspects of the canon itself. Every adaptation under discussion in this chapter is conservative in formula: Holmes, with his trusted sidekick (be it a Watson or Roger) must work together to solve a mystery. However, the purpose of these cases and casework is not the same as those of the Sherlock Holmes canon. These adaptations do not normalize masculinity but instead challenge it. This elasticity extends to my next chapter, which shifts away from the bromance to examine the feminist appropriations of the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Chapter Four

Sherlock-Charlotte Holmes: Radical, Feminist Appropriations

“A core value of feminist thought is a woman’s right to choose: on matters ranging from personal sexual preferences and family planning, to what career she seeks to pursue, choice is central.”

-Anne Burns, “In Full View”

Sir Robert Baden-Powell (1857-1941), founder of the Boy Scouts and life-long military officer for the British Empire, studied Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories “as modes of modelling manliness” in his *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction In Good Citizenship* (1908). In his book on Sherlock Holmes and masculinity, literary critic Joseph A. Kestner describes *Scouting for Boys* as “one of the most significant texts in imprinting manliness on generations of young men in the early twentieth century” (1-2). One of Baden-Powell’s lessons in manliness focuses on observation and deduction: “When a scout has learned to notice ‘[a] sign’, he must then learn to ‘put this and that together’... This is called ‘deduction’” (89). Baden-Powell suggests that, when teaching deduction, instructors “read aloud a story in which a good amount of observation of detail occurs, with consequent deduction, such as in either the ‘Memoirs’¹³¹ or the ‘Adventures of Sherlock Holmes’” (94). *Scouting for Boys*, then, modelled masculine behavior “through the use of one of the most famous characters from popular fiction” and specifically a popular fiction character steeped in “qualities which were radically gendered as masculine in Victorian culture: observation, rationalism, factuality, logic, comradeship, daring and pluck” (Kestner 2). Baden-Powell’s emphasis on observation and deduction underscores keen attention to what Conan Doyle termed “the modern masculine novel,” a “self-conscious challenge to what many late Victorian men of letters regarded as the feminization of literature” (Mallet 152). Victorian literature, it seemed, needed saving from the petticoats.

¹³¹ Baden-Powell is referring to *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*

This fourth chapter departs from traditional masculine interpretations, like Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*, of the Sherlock Holmes canon and instead builds on the feminist aspects of the canon itself. Despite Baden-Powell's attention to Sherlock Holmes as the epitome of masculinity and masculine reasoning and intellect, there is precedent for feminism and feminist interpretations of the Sherlock Holmes canon. As explored in my first chapter, the Sherlock Holmes canon contains feminist characters and I specifically put forth and examine: Irene Adler from "A Scandal in Bohemia," Violet Hunter from "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," and Violet Smith from "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist." Irene Adler, in particular, is a "true intellectual" and Holmes's equal (Turner 23). All three canonic characters share the "New Woman" spirit of challenging the bourgeois Victorian definition of "correct" female behavior (Ardis 27) and their presence in the Sherlock Holmes canon indicates not only Conan Doyle's awareness of the "New Woman" and her social, cultural, and political significance, but his approval of such a woman. The works under discussion in this chapter carry on this legacy.

Two twenty-first-century female novelists, Sherry Thomas and Brittany Cavallaro, re-crafted Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* into *Charlotte Holmes(es)*: Thomas's *Lady Sherlock* series and Cavallaro's *Charlotte Holmes* series re-gender and appropriate the consulting detective. I present in this chapter, then, two female Holmeses that are radical, feminist responses to the Sherlock Holmes canon. I aim to answer a specific question: Where are the radical, feminist elements in Thomas's and Cavallaro's texts? To answer this question, I analyze three specific tenets: feminism, gender studies, and adaptation theory. In answering my overall question, I offer the reader two contemporary Holmes characters that re-conceptualize Conan Doyle's detective as distinctly radical, feminist responses to the Sherlock Holmes canon.

As my first chapter argues, while Conan Doyle was a proponent of gender roles and masculinity, the Sherlock Holmes canon divulges underlying complications in Conan Doyle's beliefs. The canon itself reveals that though "Conan Doyle on the whole endorses the prevailing model of bourgeois Victorian masculinity, he also challenges it and reveals some of the inner conflicts embedded in it" (Kitsi-Mitakou 41). "New Woman" figures exemplify Conan Doyle's attention to women's rights and the value of women's intelligence and my previous chapters have identified where adaptors have also put forth feminist characters and story arcs. My second chapter, for example, looked into the transformation of Mrs. Hudson into the transgressive figures of Mrs. Hudson in BBC's *Sherlock* and Ms. Hudson in CBS's *Elementary*. However, as my third chapter indicates, feminist characters are not yet at the forefront in Sherlock Holmes adaptations and part of this chapter's purpose is to expose and examine novels that fill in that gap. In this "age of progressing gender equality" (Welch 139), literature has the opportunity to reflect those progressions, which is precisely what Thomas and Cavallaro do with their respective novel series. It is not enough to simply use female characters: those female characters must represent progress and activism.

Thomas's and Cavallaro's Charlotte Holmes characters do not fall prey to postfeminist interpretation. As explored in my second chapter, adaptations of Irene Adler often fall victim to postfeminism through a "superficial liberation" that does not do justice to Conan Doyle's original character. For example, the use of nudity and sexuality "reinforce[s] the stereotypical view of the Victorian era as repressed both in terms of gender and sexuality" (Primorac 106) instead of exploring the nuances and breaks in hegemonic gender structures. Irene Adler from Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* film franchise is one such example. Conan Doyle's Irene Adler "is portrayed to the reader as an unusually powerful and potent woman, one who defies many of

the conventions traditionally associated with nineteenth-century womanhood” (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 165-66). Irene Adler (played by Rachel McAdams) begins as a transgressive, assertive woman who evokes many feminist traits of the canonic Irene Adler. However, Irene soon loses all independence and succumbs to the role of sacrificial lamb. Ultimately, then, Irene is “a conventionally emotional, fragile woman” (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 169-70) despite her early efforts at emulating her progenitor from “A Scandal in Bohemia.” The Charlotte Holmes characters in this chapter do not fall prey to the same trap. By contrast, they defy conventionality and embody the New Woman’s transgressive spirit.

The second tenet is gender, and specifically gender as it relates to queer studies. The principle of “queer” and queer theory, according to Max Kirsch in his *Queer Theory and Social Change* (2000), is “the disassembling of common beliefs about gender and sexuality, from their representation in film, literature, and music to their placement in the social and physical sciences” (33). Thomas’s and Cavallaro’s texts perform this disassembling work in both the character of their respective Charlotte Holmeses and in the Holmes’ relationships with their Watsons and other secondary characters. Moreover, the work in these texts calls back to the BBC *Sherlock*’s queering of family relations. The idea of “family” in that television series is “fluid and situational” making this family “one of the queerest, free-form TV families yet to appear on television” (Jencson 153). As I posited in my third chapter, by denying the necessary heterosexual conclusion to the bromance, Sherlock and John queer the bromance and create a new relationship that is open to interpretation. Furthermore, the activity of “queer” is “the ‘queering’ of culture, ranging from the reinterpretation of characters in novels and cinema to the deconstruction of historical analyses” (Kirsch 33). This queering of culture held a place in my methodology and argument in my second chapter regarding secondary character adaptations and

the novels under discussion in this chapter also perform this activity. Set in Neo-Victorian London, Thomas's *Lady Sherlock* series deconstructs hegemonic social orders and the idea of separate spheres. For Cavallaro's series, the act of queering comes in Charlotte Holmes's relationships with Jamie Watson and her roommate, Lena Gupta. These two relationships do not conform to heteronormativity and instead break down gender binaries to provide nuanced responses to friendship and interpersonal relationships. Thus, whereas the homosocial bond between a male Holmes and a male Watson preserves gender binaries, these women-centered Holmes stories create room for queer interpretations that break down those binaries.

The third and last tenet is adaptation studies. In this chapter, I deliberately use "appropriation" rather than "adaptation" to describe these Charlotte Holmes characters. Per Julie Sanders, an adaptation "most often signals a relationship with an informing source text either through its title or through more embodied references." An appropriation, on the other hand, "frequently effects a more decisive journey away from the informing text into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (Sanders 35). (My third chapter, by contrast, dealt specifically with Sherlock Holmes *adaptations*.) While Thomas's and Cavallaro's texts reflect, draw from, and play with the Sherlock Holmes canon,¹³² both series are wholly new cultural artifacts that privilege feminism rather than patriarchy. Specifically, Sherry Thomas's novels, much like Guy Ritchie's film franchise and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Anna Waterhouse's novel, are Neo-Victorian and therefore situated in relation to the Victorian Era. As Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn argue, Neo-Victorian adaptations and appropriations "must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged in the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (qtd. in Primorac 92). Moreover, Neo-Victorian works are "an effective means of

¹³² For example, the debut novels in each series reference *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), the first Sherlock Holmes story.

revealing hidden histories, illuminating problematic gender politics of the past and exposing the tyrannies of patriarchy” (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 164). Thomas’s *Lady Sherlock* series performs this work. And, in a similar vein, Cavallaro’s twenty-first-century Charlotte Holmes draws on the radical feminism found in the Sherlock Holmes canon and magnifies it. Like BBC’s feminist Mary Watson, Cavallaro’s Charlotte Holmes transgresses gender binaries and exposes cultural and social issues to produce a radical, feminist character that transforms the detective into an advocate for rape victims and recovering drug addicts.

In his article on Sherlock Holmes’s adaptation to film, Matt Hills notes that a “perennial puzzle surrounding Holmes has been the detective’s ongoing popularity” (“Sherlock ‘Content’ Onscreen” 69). This comment raises the question as to why Thomas and Cavallaro utilize Sherlock Holmes to craft their novels: in other words, what role does Conan Doyle’s authority play in legitimizing these new texts? Hills comments that one facet of this authority comes from “shifting notions, myths and images of Victorian culture” (“Sherlock ‘Content’ Onscreen” 72). I posit another reason: Sherlock Holmes’s singularity as the first mass-produced consulting detective and his early popularity¹³³ cemented him as an important figure in popular culture. Given the elasticity of the detective genre and its reflection of and reliance on popular culture, Sherlock Holmes can represent and explore debates and socio and cultural preoccupations. Sherlock Holmes’s almost immediate adaptation into theatrical productions with William Gillette¹³⁴ offers another example of the character’s elasticity. Thus, the consulting detective at 221B Baker Street was never far from the public’s imagination. This early shift from print to theater in particular emphasizes not just the detective’s ability to shift in significance and

¹³³ Please refer back to my introduction and discussion of Sherlock Holmes’s immediate and unequivocal success in *The Strand Magazine*.

¹³⁴ Please refer back to my introduction for a more detailed conversation regarding Gillette’s connection to Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

meaning, but to also shift in format: from theater to film to television to book, such variety supports Hills' point that Sherlock Holmes incarnations are fluid and versatile ("Sherlock 'Content' Onscreen" 74). My dissertation reflects this versatility both in medium and in content, continuing in particular with the most radical appropriations in this final chapter.

Overall, these tenets and their intersecting points mean that the two Charlotte Holmes characters under examination here engage with multiplicity, thereby breaking down the binaries so essential to the Sherlock Holmes canon's structure.¹³⁵ This complexity presents itself in two areas: the Charlotte Holmeses themselves and the Charlottes' relationships with their secondary characters, most especially their Watsons. The Charlotte Holmes characters possess Sherlock Holmes's ratiocination, but also hold sexual experiences and other emotive characteristics that expand their gender identities. Thus, these characters are more complex than the hyper-masculine detective celebrated by Victorians like Baden-Powell. While these experiences are "at odds with" ratiocination, my character analyses in this chapter argue that the multiplicity in these appropriations creates characters that reflect twenty-first-century trends in popularizing feminism and reclaiming women's' bodies, in this case by re-locating the highly gendered rationality of a famous male character into female bodies experiencing sexuality. The Charlotte Holmes' complexities in character, in turn, foster more complex interpersonal relationships, first and foremost with their John Watson appropriations: Mrs. Watson (Sherry Thomas) and Jamie Watson (Brittany Cavallaro). Lady Charlotte's relationship with Mrs. Watson and Charlotte's relationship with Jamie embrace emotional vulnerability and intellectual stimulation; the Charlottes learn from their Watsons and value their presence as more than foils or sidekicks.

¹³⁵ Please refer back to my first chapter for a detailed explanation and examination of these binaries.

This chapter examines the first two novels in each series.¹³⁶ My purpose in narrowing my examination to these novels is that the larger plot arcs in the “first” of any series establish the groundwork for the sequels. Both Cavallaro’s and Thomas’s first novels rely on distinct but parallel patterns. The first two of each series, *A Study in Scarlet Women* (Thomas) and *A Study in Charlotte* (Cavallaro), explore the new Holmes and Watson partnerships when Lady Charlotte befriends Mrs. Watson as a lady’s companion and Charlotte recruits Jamie for a covert murder investigation. Ultimately, each Charlotte must learn from her Watson to catch a murderer. In the second novels, *A Conspiracy in Belgravia* (Thomas) and *The Last of August* (Cavallaro), the Holmes-Watson relationships encounter significant challenges that test the trust between a Holmes and her Watson. Lady Charlotte discovers that her pseudo love interest, Lord Ingram, arranged her first encounter with Mrs. Watson. When Jamie and Charlotte’s relationship faces a significance challenge when they work with August Moriarty, Charlotte’s former tutor and the reason for her banishment to the United States. Additionally, the secondary characters develop more fully in the second novels: Lady Charlotte must navigate Livia’s anxieties and Bernadine’s increasing mental illness while the reader sees Lena from Charlotte’s first-person narrative instead of Jamie’s perspective as an outsider to the two roommates. These parallels in plot and character create a tacit, fluid dialogue and analysis in my scholarly interpretive frame between these two appropriations of Sherlock Holmes. To avoid any potential barriers between two primary characters whose names are both “Charlotte,” I will always refer to Sherry Thomas’s character as Lady Charlotte, since that is her official class status and a part of the series name (the *Lady Sherlock Series*). When referring to Brittany Cavallaro’s character, I will always use ‘Charlotte,’ as that is her official name in the novels.

¹³⁶ Thomas’s third novel, *The Hollow of Fear*, was published in October 2018. Cavallaro’s third novel, *A Case for Jamie*, was published in March 2018.

Series Summaries

Thomas's Neo-Victorian novels are set in 1886 London. Lady Charlotte is the daughter of Lord Henry Holmes and Lady Holmes and the youngest of four daughters (Henrietta, Bernadine, Livia, and Charlotte). Lady Charlotte yearns for a life other than that of a "happily" married woman. To ensure that she does not suffer such a fate, she purposefully seduces the already-married Roger Shrewsbury, explaining to the irate Lord and Lady Holmes that removing her "maidenhead" was the only rational step to ensure that they did not marry her off for status or money (*Scarlet Women* 40). Lady Charlotte hopes instead to find independence and economic security through employment and take care of Livia and Bernadine;¹³⁷ to that end, she runs away after her parents threaten to take her to their country house as a form of exile. However, with a stained reputation and no references, Lady Charlotte soon becomes poverty-stricken. Her fortunes take an unexpected turn when a mysterious former stage actress and widow, Mrs. Watson, impressed by Lady Charlotte's deductive abilities, hires the disgraced young woman as a lady's companion. Mrs. Watson's interest in her young companion increases significantly once the widow discovers that Lady Charlotte is the woman behind the reclusive *Sherlock* Holmes, a consulting detective whose deductive powers have helped Scotland Yard with several cases and whose physical identity and residence are unknown. The two renovate Mrs. Watson's rooms at 18 Upper Baker Street and open a detective agency, with Lady Charlotte taking on the role of Sherlock's sister. At 18 Upper Baker Street, Lady Charlotte greets clients and hears their stories; she then goes into an adjoining room where the invalid "Sherlock" solves the client's case and relays the details to Lady Charlotte, who in turn gives the client his/her answer and takes the

¹³⁷ Henrietta is not included in her sister's plans because the eldest Holmes sister is already set to marry an eligible man. However, Bernadine and Livia (like Charlotte) have no such aspirations. Additionally, Thomas's descriptions of Bernadine identify her as a disabled individual, which I will address later in this chapter.

payment. In such a setting, Mrs. Watson serves as a housekeeper or maid, dependent upon the situation at hand.

While this dynamic duo takes on smaller cases, the bulk of Thomas's first novel concerns Lady Charlotte's pursuit of a string of mysterious murders with the help of Inspector Treadles of Scotland Yard and a man from Charlotte's past, Lord Ingram. Aside from Mrs. Watson, Lord Ingram is the only one who knows Lady Charlotte's secret identity as Sherlock Holmes. Thomas's second novel finds Lady Charlotte helping Lord Ingram's wife locate her missing lover, who happens to be Lady Charlotte's illegitimate half-brother. In the process, Lady Charlotte must deal with a marriage proposal from Lord Ingram's brother as well as the realization that Lord Ingram sent Mrs. Watson to save Lady Charlotte after her affair with Roger Shrewsbury. *A Conspiracy in Belgravia* ends with a series of clues leading to Lord Ingram's wife's involvement with a criminal organization led by a mysterious individual known only by the name Moriarty.

Cavallaro's novels are set in the twenty-first century with Charlotte Holmes and Jamie (James) Watson. Charlotte and Jamie are the descendants of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John Watson (respectively). In this fictional universe, Arthur Conan Doyle (perhaps almost ironically, given his personal loathing for the Sherlock Holmes series) was Dr. Watson's publisher. While Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick lived long, illustrious lives together, their descendants did not maintain that camaraderie. Charlotte grew up in the Holmes family mansion in Sussex, UK. Figure 4.1 depicts a Holmes family tree, as drawn by Charlotte at Jamie's request¹³⁸ and included as a preface to *The Last of August*. The Holmes family trained their children in the arts of detection, and Charlotte solved her first investigation (a jewel heist) at the tender age of 10 (A

¹³⁸ No family tree for the Watsons exists yet.

Study in Charlotte 10). Unlike Charlotte Holmes and her penchant for solving crime, the only commonalities between Jamie and his great-great-great grandfather are his passion for writing and reverence for the Sherlock Holmes stories. Jamie’s father and mother are divorced, and he

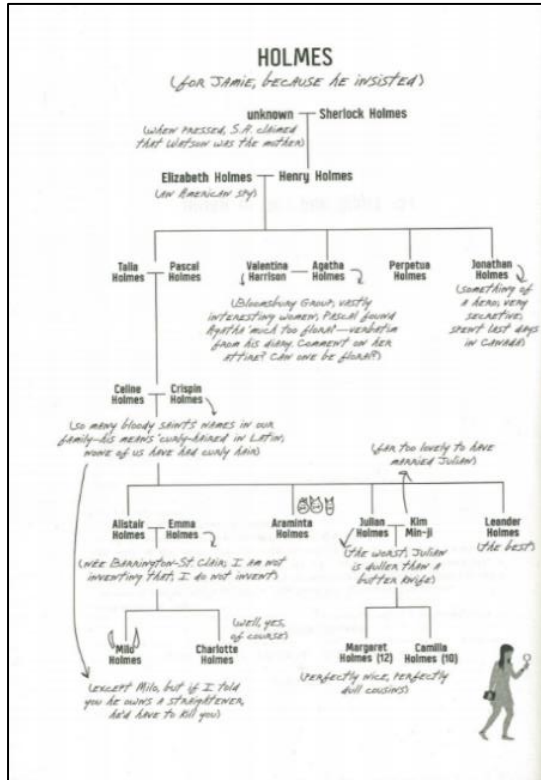


Figure 4.1. The Holmes family tree; *The Last of August*; personal photocopy

lives with his mother in London while his father moved to Connecticut in the United States with a new wife and two children. While Jamie holds aspirations of becoming a novelist and voraciously re-reads the Sherlock Holmes stories, he has never contacted the Holmes family.¹³⁹ These two families collide in *Study in Charlotte* at Connecticut’s private preparatory school, Sherringford, when Jamie and Charlotte combine forces to solve the murder of Jamie’s rugby teammate and Charlotte’s rapist, Lee Dobson. In the sequel, Charlotte and Jamie embark on a violent and vengeful battle against the Moriarty clan,

which results in the death of Charlotte’s former tutor, August Moriarty.

While a twenty-first-century Charlotte Holmes with a rugby-playing Jamie Holmes might not offer a direct parallel to a Neo-Victorian Lady Charlotte Holmes, both Thomas’s and Cavallaro’s works share common themes. First and foremost, both series are feminist texts that appropriate an iconic male character who has traditionally embodied patriarchy and masculine authority. Furthermore, these new partnerships between Holmes and her Watson are affective

¹³⁹ The one exception is Jamie’s father’s relationship with Charlotte’s uncle, Leander Holmes. The two were flatmates in college and have kept in touch since their university days. The reader discovers in *The Last of August* that Leander (an openly gay man) had romantic feelings for Jamie’s father, but those affections were not returned.

and emotive in a way not seen in the Sherlock Holmes canon between the detective and doctor. These affective relationships embody the feminist idea of care and therefore create a new Holmes for the twenty-first-century.

Re-Writing Sherlock Holmes

Since Sherlock Holmes's first case in 1887, the number of adaptations across media (stage, film, radio, text, online, etc.) are legion and too dispersed to accurately describe or solidify into a specific number. However, I would argue that Sherlock Holmes is always recognizable *as* Sherlock Holmes. Specifically, as Lynette Porter points out, Holmes's identity is "determined by the way he processes information" ("Introduction" 2). Deduction "is Holmes's ruling passion" (Clausen 67) and ratiocination his method. Thomas and Cavallaro's Charlotte Holmeses are no different; they also rely on keen, sometimes uncanny, ratiocination to discover secrets and solve mysteries. What makes Lady Charlotte and Charlotte distinct, therefore, is their gender and its radical, feminist dimension when synthesized with ratiocination.

Ratiocination & Scientific Reasoning

The Anglo-American patriarchal social system values masculinity (often conflated with maleness), "which is identified with the language of reason, government and administration – the language of realism" (R. Allen 119). In contrast, feminine language (often conflated with femaleness) is habitually identified with emotion and sentimentality. Nineteenth-century literary culture specifically, according to Catherine A. Judd, has a "misogynistic critical legacy" wherein "femininity became one more weapon in the arsenal of biased literary criticism" (qtd. in Jung 295). George Eliot's reputation as a writer exemplifies this divide, as she avoided this femininity by embodying both in name and in language the masculinity so valued by Victorian society:

If a woman writes in something akin to the language of man – makes herself even an honorary man as in the case of George Eliot – she may be admitted to the masculine-dominated canon of high literature. But if she writes in a way that foregrounds emotion, coincidences, etc., she will be relegated to the feminine and the popular – and forgotten. (R. Allen 120)

Per Richard Allen’s quote, a female author will find easier acceptance in literary circles if she utilizes masculine language and a male or gender-neutral pseudonym. As such, during the Victorian era women often employed pennames that “could be taken as masculine” to fulfill a “modest wish for anonymity” and “the desire to compete with male writers on equal terms” (Fowler 125). Elizabeth Gaskell often used the name Cotton Mather Mills and George Eliot’s legal name was Mary Ann Evans. Another popular example of this masculine preference among female Victorian authors is Charlotte Brontë, whose penname Currer Bell “was meant to obscure gender-specific associations with female authorship” (Jung 294).¹⁴⁰ Elizabeth Gaskell summarizes the prejudices against female authors in her work *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857):

Henceforward Charlotte Brontë’s existence becomes divided into two parallel currents – her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman... When a man becomes an author, it is probably merely a change of employment to him... But no one can take up the quiet, regular duties of the daughter, the wife, or the mother, as well as she whom God has appointed to fill that particular place (qtd. in Salmon 146-147)

Gaskell’s comment highlights Victorian society’s preoccupation with gender roles: a man can easily transition into employment as an author; however, a woman cannot make that transition with ease because her “natural” role as wife and mother is a matter of destiny.¹⁴¹ The name “Currer Bell” allowed Charlotte Brontë to pursue a career and assert her authority as an author

¹⁴⁰ Additionally, Charlotte’s sisters, Emily and Anne, also masked their gender through the use of male pseudonyms.

¹⁴¹ Unlike some of her contemporaries, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote under her own name after using ‘Cotton Mather Mills’ as a pseudonym. Gaskell’s friend and mentor, William Howlitt, told her “it would be advantageous if her works ‘were known as the works of a lady’” (Fowler 125). Thus, as my first chapter emphasized, gender roles were not stagnant or without their nuances.

(Jung 297) by confounding the gender binary that privileged masculine over feminine speech.

Such language binaries contribute largely to Sherlock Holmes's success. Sherlock Holmes is Conan Doyle's "priest-magician" and under his auspices "221B Baker Street became a magical site at which deformed, anxious, and estranged masculinities encountered the corrective resymbolizations of a manhood predicated on an advanced and intelligent control of language codes" (Barsham 1). As discussed in my first chapter, Holmes's panoptic role in Victorian society meant he possessed the necessary observation skills and correction agency to "fix" gender and racial transgressions. By re-gendering the Sherlock Holmes character, Cavallaro and Thomas challenge masculinity's hegemony over ratiocination and assert control over language historically gendered as masculine. For Lady Charlotte in her Neo-Victorian setting, such masculinity is distinctively and actively combative against social standards. For Charlotte Holmes in the twenty-first-century, the use of such language is her right and asserts feminism's tenet of equality.

Moreover, contemporary authors such as J.K. Rowling also employ this technique. When writing the *Cormoran Strike* novels, Rowling publishes under the pseudonym Robert Galbraith. On the official Robert Galbraith website, the "About" page addresses this pseudonym and its purpose: "J.K. Rowling's original intention for writing as Robert Galbraith was for the books to be judged on their own merit; and to establish Galbraith as a well-regarded name in crime in its own right...J.K. Rowling continues to write the crime series under the Galbraith pseudonym to...keep the distinction from her other writing."¹⁴² I argue that Rowling's adoption of a male pseudonym is not unlike canonic Irene Adler's adoption of male clothing to mask her femaleness. As Antonija Primorac asserts, "Adler's ability to shape-shift and cross gender

¹⁴² <https://robert-galbraith.com/about/>

barriers adds to her mystique, but first and foremost it qualifies her as an autonomous subject. Her transformations signal her agency and her control over her own body and identity: she acts on her own behalf and in her own interest” (96). Charlotte Brontë, J.K. Rowling, Irene Adler, and even Lady Charlotte cross this gender barrier to not only act in their own interests but do so to become active players in society. As Lady Charlotte tells Mrs. Watson when explaining why she relies on a male pseudonym and the subsequent implication that she is therefore a man, “Men have a tendency to discount a woman’s thinking, even men who were otherwise openminded” (*Scarlet Women* 176). This assertive agency characterizes both Lady Charlotte and Charlotte and emphasizes their collective feminism in re-interpreting the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Lady Charlotte Holmes

Both Lady Charlotte Holmes and Charlotte Holmes possess their progenitor’s ratiocination and utilize it to startle and unsettle the people in their lives as well as to solve cases, thus signaling their agency. At the young age of four, Lady Charlotte exhibits this Holmesian intelligence (which she describes as “discernment” [*Scarlet Women* 153]) when she solves a pictographic note written on a message board in a village green. Lady Charlotte notifies her awe-struck family that the message is incorrect. The message, from the local vicar to a Miss Tomlinson, depicts a well, a horseshoe, the Virgin Mary, and a cat in mid-meow. While the Holmes family is convinced the message is a silly game, Lady Charlotte does not agree:

Charlotte cast a critical eye at the picture, her expression amusingly grown-up. “It isn’t a very good one, is it?”

[Sir Henry] “Maybe not, poppet. But why do you say it’s a proposal in the first place?”
“Because it says *Will you marry me*. Actually, it says *Well you marry me*.”

“I can see a well. And I can see that the horseshoe opens up and looks like a U. and the Virgin’s name is Mary,” said Sir Henry, “But how is the cat ‘me’?”

...

[Lady Charlotte] “The cat is in the middle of a meow. But since there’s only half a cat, it’s half a meow. And half a meow is ‘me.’” (*Scarlet Women* 14).

When Lady Holmes scoffs that her four-year-old daughter does not understand marriage, Lady Charlotte answers, “It is when a gentleman asks a lady to become his wife.” “[S]tunned silence” (*Scarlet Women* 14) meets this answer. Here Lady Charlotte demonstrates both a sophisticated understanding of language as well as knowledge of social conventions; quite a feat for a four-year-old girl. Furthermore, the ensuing incredulous reaction from her family members is reminiscent of Dr. John Watson's stunned responses when Sherlock Holmes presents his companion with conclusions gleaned through logical, deductive reasoning. (For example, Watson cries, “How in the world did you deduce that?” in *A Study in Scarlet* when Holmes informs the doctor that a messenger to 221B Baker Street is a retired Marine sergeant [Conan Doyle 13].) Just as Watson exhibits astonishment at Holmes’s deductions, so too is Lady Charlotte’s family struck by the perceptions of a four-year-old girl.

Lady Charlotte’s ratiocination becomes a tool to secure first her lodgings and then her career once she flees from the Holmes residence. For example, Mrs. Wallace, who runs the boarding house in which the fugitive rents a room when she absconds from the Holmes residence, discovers Lady Charlotte’s true identity. Mrs. Wallace confronts the runaway, saying, “This is a house of virtue, of good Christian respectability. There is no room for you, Miss Holmes”¹⁴³ (*Scarlet Women* 90). When Mrs. Wallace refuses to return Lady Charlotte’s unused rent money, Lady Charlotte’s response insinuates that she has employed her deductive skills to uncover Mrs. Wallace’s quite un-Christian secrets: “You said that this is a house of virtue, of good Christian respectability. But you yourself entertain, on a regular basis, a man to whom you’re not married” (*Scarlet Women* 91). Lady Charlotte’s explanation of this deduction is quite elementary. First, she has observed that Mrs. Wallace’s chairs in her private parlor all have an

¹⁴³ Mrs. Wallace is referring to Lady Charlotte’s scandalous seduction of a married man to lose her virginity.

antimacassar.¹⁴⁴ Lady Charlotte also asks Mrs. Wallace, “[W]hy would a woman leave muddy prints in the shape of a pair of men’s shoes on the doormat just inside the private entrance to this apartment?” (*Scarlet Women* 91), implying that Mrs. Wallace has recently entertained a male visitor. As a final point, Lady Charlotte observed a scrap of blotting paper with the words, “*Cordially yours, George Atwell*” in Mrs. Wallace’s wastebasket. This man is the same *married* man who owns a pharmaceutical store opposite the boarding house. Lady Charlotte’s deductions level the playing field between her and Mrs. Wallace, and the landlady returns Charlotte’s money (*Scarlet Women* 92-93). Lady Charlotte’s mind is quite “a thing of beauty” (*Scarlet Women* 45), as this exchange demonstrates to the reader.

Lady Charlotte’s ratiocination reveals Mrs. Watson’s circumstances to the young woman when they first meet at a post office. Lady Charlotte deduces that Mrs. Watson's money is new because no one "who'd been raised to follow the unspoken standards of Society, not even a woman with Lady Charlotte's 'magpie tastes,' as Livia called them, would sport so elaborate and fanciful a confection for an outing to the post office” (*Scarlet Women* 84). Additionally, while Mrs. Watson does not wear a wedding band, Lady Charlotte notes that the "parrotfinch on [Mrs. Watson's] hat was perched on a little nest made of black crape. The same material formed a most discreet border around the blue reticule the woman held in her hand." The amateur detective further informs the reader that, per Victorian mourning conventions, "Women only wore black crape if they had lost their husbands. And the woman here, despite her extravagantly exuberant day dress, wished to honor her late spouse in a subtle manner, nearly invisible expressions of grief and remembrance woven into her daily attire" (*Scarlet Women* 84). Such observations and deductions evoke not only Sherlock Holmes’s methods, but also Baden-Powell’s instructions to

¹⁴⁴ Macassar is an oil often used by men to make their hair oily and flat. An antimacassar keeps that oil off the backs of chairs.

Boy Scout counselors. In his lessons on deduction, Baden-Powell begs his reader to remember how Sherlock Holmes “met a stranger and noticed that he was looking fairly well-to-do, in new clothes and with a mourning band on his sleeve” and that the detective deduces that the man was a Sergeant in mourning (70). Baden-Powell utilizes this example to underscore his instruction to closely observe people and their appearance “to read their character and their thoughts” (68). Here, Lady Charlotte employs these same skills and thereby appropriates this masculine practice to establish her agency in a time when the construction of separate spheres meant she should possess almost none.

Lady Charlotte finally finds a place to fully apply her skills at 18 Upper Baker Street, one of Mrs. Watson’s properties. Here, Lady Charlotte transforms her consulting detective role with Scotland Yard into a profitable business. Clients visit regularly and leave satisfied: a heartsick young man visits with a riddle from his lover; a desperate wife has misplaced an emerald ring from her husband; and Inspector Treadles calls on “Sherlock” Holmes concerning the mysterious deaths of Mr. Sackville, Lady Drummond, and Baroness Shrewsbury. Lady Charlotte is also perceptive enough to see when a request is a fake: while a young woman’s letter to Sherlock Holmes regarding a mysterious man with a bouquet of yellow zinnias intrigues Mrs. Watson, Charlotte immediately recognizes that the letter is from a newspaper writer whose intentions are to uncover Sherlock Holmes’s identity (*Scarlet Women* 227). Charlotte performs a similar “priest-magician” role at 18 Upper Baker Street: she successfully utilizes “an advanced and intelligent control of language codes” (Barsham 1) to correct social errors. In short, she takes the English language, which relies on a male-female hierarchy that privileges male (and therefore rational) speech (Fishman 89) and utilizes it for herself to establish her identity as a detective. This agency aligns Lady Charlotte with the Victorian “New Woman” and her active efforts to

challenge the social edict that a woman's behavior needed to be "codified within the marital system of the bourgeois social order" (Ardis 93). Lady Charlotte does not utilize language codes to simply masquerade as a man, but to empower herself as a woman. Her successful commandeering of language emphasizes that power, and specifically power between men and women, is not an abstract force. Rather, power is a human accomplishment "situated in everyday interaction[s]" (Fishman 89). While Conan Doyle believed this ability defined masculinity, Thomas's *Lady Sherlock* series breaks that gender binary. She appropriates Sherlock Holmes's ability to listen "to the inarticulate and incomprehensible stories of others, summarizing and eventually reframing them as complete explanatory narratives" (Barsham 107). In this traditionally-masculine, but now feminine role, Lady Charlotte ensures that a young man successfully courts an eligible young woman, a wife does not disappoint her husband, and Scotland Yard catches a brutal murderer.

And Lady Charlotte does not hesitate to apply her skills at gruesome crime scenes. In *A Conspiracy in Belgravia*, Lord Bancroft¹⁴⁵ takes Charlotte to a dead body. After a brief examination, Charlotte first tells Lord Bancroft what he already knows about the dead man, and second, what he does *not* know: "The suit was bought at a secondhand shop – probably in an effort to conceal himself from those who did not mean him well. And not a secondhand shop in Kensington that a lady's maid who has been given castoffs might take her wares to, but the kind you find in Seven Dials and other such districts" (*Conspiracy* 136). Charlotte then makes two further deductions: that this man is an orphan and that he has written a secret message in braille

¹⁴⁵ Lord Bancroft Ashburton is Lord Ingram's older brother and one of Lady Charlotte's suitors. Bancroft is a bureaucrat who, according to Lady Charlotte, is "in charge of the inner workings of the empire" (*Scarlet Women* 299). At the end of *Scarlet Women*, Bancroft sends "Sherlock Holmes" a note through Lord Ingram, asking to meet. This meeting takes place at the beginning of *Conspiracy* and reveals that Bancroft has discovered that "Sherlock Holmes" and Lady Charlotte are one and the same. Lord Bancroft proposes marriage and offers Charlotte detective work while she debates this proposal.

implicating his murderer (*Conspiracy* 138-139). By surpassing Lord Bancroft's abilities, a man with a title and high position in the British government, Lady Charlotte effectively takes control of a conversation, thereby challenging men's traditional control *over* conversation (Fishman 98). In short, Lady Charlotte Holmes, a disgraced young woman living with a former actress,¹⁴⁶ successfully mastered the same skills Baden-Powell and Conan Doyle believed to represent Victorian masculinity, again emphasizing her role as a transgressive, feminist character.

As a Neo-Victorian character, Lady Charlotte directly challenges social and cultural conventions through her mastery of the patriarchal "masculine script" (Kestner 2). As explored in my first chapter, Victorians devised strict gender roles for men and women. This ideology of separate spheres promoted a femininity for women that emphasized "dependence, subordinate status, domesticity, and sexual modesty" (Steinbach 133); this ideology means that women could neither control or experience sexual desire. Men, on the other hand, "were expected to marry and to desire sex with their wives. They were also expected to have sufficient sexual desire that they were driven to have pre- and sometimes extramarital sex with prostitutes" (Steinbach 135). (A trait mentioned in *Scarlet Women* when Roger Shrewbury's mother comments that "men are creatures of unbound lust" [39] but Lady Charlotte should have known better than to engage in an affair.) Lady Charlotte's control over her sexuality and sexual desire directly contradicts this binary and exemplifies Neo-Victorian fiction's mandate to re-interpret, re-discover, and re-vision the Victorians (Primorac 92). As stated previously, Lady Charlotte deliberately loses her virginity to a married man to ensure that she would not be pawn in her parents' marriage schemes. When Livia asks her younger sister if the sexual experience hurt, Lady Charlotte responded, "If you speak of the act of penetration, it wasn't exactly pleasurable but it was no

¹⁴⁶ Both identifiers here are transgressive in and of themselves, and I will explore them more fully in this chapter.

agony. Far more unpleasant was the fact that I had to go through such extreme measures in a bid for a modicum of freedom” (*Scarlet Women* 55). Lady Charlotte, then, used her virginity as a tool to gain freedom, a move that speaks of rationality and scientific reasoning rather than passion. Moreover, Lady Charlotte’s explanation as to why she chose Roger Shrewsbury is highly rational, as she relates to her enraged parents:

I needed a man. Moreover, I needed a man who cannot be compelled to marry me, therefore a married man. This presented some difficulty, as most married gentlemen I know would refuse me on grounds of either principle or caution. So I had to settle for someone who is both amoral and somewhat reckless...Mr. Shrewsbury fit my criteria perfectly. Unfortunately, he is also an idiot. (*Scarlet Women* 40)

Like her predecessor Sherlock Holmes, Lady Charlotte possesses a “cold, precise” and “admirably balanced” mind (Conan Doyle 145). Lady Charlotte’s intellectual control of her sexuality transgresses the Victorian social construct that women’s behavior is governed by emotion.¹⁴⁷

Although not sexually attracted to Roger Shrewsbury, Lady Charlotte does feel sexual attraction for Lord Ingram. Thus, Lady Charlotte’s sexuality and how she views sex is multifaceted. She desired freedom from a forced marriage, and rid herself of her virginity in a rational, logical manner. However, she experiences both sexual attraction and feelings of love for her childhood friend Lord Ingram. When Lord Ingram visits “Sherlock Holmes” with Inspector Treadles, Lady Charlotte feels a “sensation in her chest” that is a “mix of pleasure and pain.” She connects those feelings with “the pangs of longing and the futility of regret”; it seems that Lord Ingram “made her human...And being human was possibly her least favorite aspect of life” (*Scarlet Women* 191). Whereas Sherlock Holmes found all such emotions “abhorrent” (Conan Doyle 145), Lady Charlotte experiences conflict over her more “human” emotions, particularly

¹⁴⁷ As of Spring 2019, no scholarship reads Lady Charlotte as asexual. While her description of sex here could be read as asexual, her feelings towards Lord Ingram, which I address later, are distinctly sexual as well as romantic.

because these emotions denote sexual desire. When she and Lord Ingram finally kiss at the end of *Scarlet Women*, Lady Charlotte describes the interaction as “Sweet. Bitter. Pleasure. Pain. And then only fierce, mindless sensations, only heat and electricity” (321). Here she exhibits her multiplicity: she is not only a rational, reasoning creature, but a woman who experiences lust and passion. Thus, not only is Lady Charlotte not wholly a creature of rational intellect, but she experiences overlapping feelings of love and desire. Thomas therefore crafts a Holmes appropriation with traits that emphasize her female body and its emotions while simultaneously continuing the Holmesian legacy of ratiocination. Examining her as a whole, Lady Charlotte embodies appropriation’s creation of a “deepened and enriched” experience (Sanders 37).

Furthermore, Thomas’s *Lady Sherlock* series challenges the Neo-Victorian New Woman’s superficial engagement with radicalism. As Karen Sturgeon-Dodsworth argues in “‘Whatever it is that you desire, halve it’: The Compromising of Contemporary Femininities in Neo-Victorian Fictions,” the Neo-Victorian New Woman character in films and literary texts embodies “an entirely illusory radicalism”¹⁴⁸ (165) not in keeping with her counterpart, the Victorian New Woman. Sturgeon-Dodsworth employs adaptations to exemplify her argument and appropriate to this dissertation she uses Guy Ritchie’s Irene Adler as one example of a Neo-Victorian New Woman who lacks a “framing context to situate her rebelliousness as a reaction towards patriarchal strictures.” In her analysis, Sturgeon-Dodsworth asserts that the Neo-Victorian New Woman character begins as someone who violates social and cultural norms; they are like Irene Adler at the beginning of *Sherlock Holmes* (2009): “a modern woman, sexual, desirous, transgressive” (166). This Adler breaks into Sherlock Holmes’s rooms at 221B Baker Street, soundly beats two men who try to attack her in a back alley, and leaves Holmes naked and

¹⁴⁸ Please refer to my first chapter for a more detailed analysis of the Victorian New Woman’s radicalism.

tied to a bed. Notable, too, is Holmes's file on Irene, consisting of news articles like "Missing naval documents lead to resignation of Bulgarian prime minister" and "Scandalous affair ends engagement of Hapsburg prince to Romanov princess." These titles are intended to impress the viewer; Irene is "a provocative woman in control, a woman for whom propriety and the moral standards of the time are incidental and a woman encoded as attractive *because* of her dynamic, transgressive and modern qualities" (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 167). However, Irene soon loses her independence. This character arc takes Irene Adler from assertive agent to passive woman, one who is "conventionally emotional, fragile" (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 169-170). Therefore, Irene



Figure 4.2. Irene Adler making herself comfortable in Holmes's rooms at 221B Baker Street, <http://rachaelnotrachel.tumblr.com/post/6534016051/sherlock-holmes-2009-sad-sherlock-is-sad>

Adler represents the Neo-Victorian New Woman's too frequent¹⁴⁹ reliance on "choices that superficially signify agency and yet on closer inspection betoken a return to the strictures of traditional binaries" (Sturgeon-Dodson 173). This superficiality does not do justice to

Victorian "New Woman" characters, whose transgressions are active and assertive. In sum, these twenty-first-century characters create "an entirely illusory radicalism" (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 165).

I posit that Lady Charlotte Holmes embodies the radicalism that Sturgeon-Dodsworth yearns to see more frequently in Neo-Victorian texts. Lady Charlotte's successful consulting detective practice and her ability to support herself outside marriage express the New Woman's "challenge...to the bourgeois Victorian social order's prescriptive definition of 'correct' female

¹⁴⁹ I use "too-frequent" here because Sturgeon-Dodsworth's argument examines a few specific Neo-Victorian films and literary texts that embody transgressive femininity.

behaviour [and] the pattern of thinking in hierarchically organized binary positions that pits men against women, ‘good’ women against ‘fallen’ ones, the middle class against the working class” (Ardis 27). However, a woman cannot free herself entirely from the Victorian patriarchy. While Ritchie’s Irene Adler succumbs to passivity and needs Sherlock Holmes to rescue her, Lady Charlotte instead sets up house with a former stage actress. This choice is one of transgression rather than survival. In *Conspiracy*, Lord Bancroft offers to marry Lady Charlotte. To make his proposal more inviting, he says that he would allow the young detective to continue her work with Scotland Yard and at 18 Upper Baker Street (*Conspiracy* 21-22). Lady Charlotte seriously considers this proposal as it would also supply her with the means of supporting Livia and Bernadine; however, Lady Charlotte refuses and this refusal indicates her independence. She takes an active stance against Victorian conventions for women, which dictated marriage and family as the norm. Such independence is not for survival, then, but because she is a radical, feminist character. Therefore, Lady Charlotte’s transgressive nature is always a negotiation between herself and the Victorian patriarchic system. Lady Charlotte would be forced to sell herself or return to her parents without Mrs. Watson’s help at 18 Upper Baker Street.

Lady Charlotte further subverts gender and the Victorian patriarchy by using the name “Sherlock Holmes” when communicating with Inspector Treadles and Scotland Yard. Lord Ingram introduced Inspector Treadles to Sherlock Holmes via correspondence two years prior to *Scarlet Women*. While Treadles did not personally meet the detective, “Sherlock Holmes” helped the Scotland Yard inspector solve the case of a murdered Egyptologist (*Scarlet Women* 48-50) through a series of letters. Since that time, Treadles has sought the detective’s help on several cases, always through Lord Ingram. Critics might posit that Lady Charlotte’s use of a male disguise lessens her rebellious foray into the public sphere because she *hides* her gender instead

of *embracing* her womanhood. However, I would argue that this disguise is in keeping with the Victorian New Woman and Victorian women writers who used pseudonym gender confusion to their advantage, and even reminds readers of Conan Doyle's Irene Adler, whose male disguise enabled her to successfully trick Sherlock Holmes. Furthermore, in "The Adventure of the Mazarine Stone" (1921), Sherlock Holmes himself cross-dresses as an elderly woman. Both Adler's and Holmes's use of cross-dressing is transgressive. For Adler, this ability to disguise herself signifies her agency and control over her body; for Holmes, cross-dressing is part of his transgressive character because such a move feminizes him outwardly and thus subverts gender expectations based on dress (a concept I addressed in my third chapter). A precedent exists in fiction circles for hiding one's gender, and specifically in the Sherlock Holmes canon for relying on gender disguises. Additionally, *The Lady Sherlock Series* as a title further disrupts gender expectations. Thomas synthesizes a female connotation ("Lady") with a traditionally male name ("Sherlock") to play with readers' gender assumptions. This tension between feminine "Lady" and masculine "Sherlock" crafts a heteroglossia in meaning: Thomas's series possesses room for two voices, that of appropriation (Lady Charlotte) *and* that of original (Sherlock Holmes).

Inspector Treadles's reactions after Lady Charlotte reveals herself to him underscore these gender biases. As Treadles's relationship with the mysterious Sherlock Holmes blossoms, the Scotland Yard Inspector admits to himself that Holmes is a "venerated institution" in his life. He comes to admire "the resolute agility of [Holmes's] mind" (*Scarlet Women* 50). However, Treadles cannot overcome his horror once he learns that Sherlock Holmes is, in fact, the disgraced Lady Charlotte Holmes. The inspector cannot reconcile how "such a diamond-bright mind could have made such foolish, downright immoral decisions" (*Scarlet Women* 313) and believes Lady Charlotte "a fallen woman, one who had never seemed remotely bashful"

(*Conspiracy 2*) about her actions. Treadles's use of words such as "immoral" and "fallen" indicate that he holds to the Victorian bourgeois cultural code that requires Victorian women to exhibit their femininity through chastity. This prejudiced opinion accentuates his shortcomings and gives Lady Charlotte good cause to obscure her gender. Here, then, this Neo-Victorian novel fulfills its mandate to illustrate gender politics and unmask the patriarchy and its oppression (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 164). Considering how frequently gender binaries and patriarchal authority play into the Sherlock Holmes canon, Lady Charlotte's push-back creates an adaptive work that calls on the reader to re-examine the conservative elements in the Holmes canon.

Sherry Thomas created a multi-voiced character in her *Lady Charlotte Holmes*. This Sherlock Holmes appropriation is an adept detective with deductive skills and a proficient use of ratiocination. This ratiocination enables her not only to participate in the public sphere under the guise of "Sherlock Holmes," but also provides her with the skillset necessary to utilize her sexuality to her advantage: Lady Charlotte takes control of her virginity and ensures that it is not a tool for her parents in the marriage market. Furthermore, Lady Charlotte embodies this "New Woman" idea of plurality (Ardis 114): she is not a monolithic or one-dimensional character, but rather a complex young female detective. She is not only an inheritor of Sherlock Holmes's masculine logic, but a woman independent of Conan Doyle's literary legacy. Therefore, Sherry Thomas encourages her readers to reevaluate the Sherlock Holmes canon and the consulting detective's significance to readers. In creating a female appropriation of Sherlock Holmes, Thomas brings up issues like a woman's place in Victorian society. This re-orientation takes Conan Doyle's gesture towards feminism found in the Sherlock Holmes canon's "New Woman" characters and brings women to the forefront. With a woman detective, too, readers must become more flexible in their understanding of Sherlock Holmes as a character and what he represents to

fans, culture, society, and even politics. Lady Charlotte's status as a radical, feminist appropriation not only highlights Sherlock Holmes's own radicalism, but his shortcomings and participation in social structures that restrict women. Lady Charlotte, then, is a truer representation of rebellion against Victorian society than Sherlock Holmes.

Charlotte Holmes

Cavallaro's twenty-first-century teenaged Charlotte Holmes provides a similar challenge to readers' understandings of Sherlock Holmes. As with Lady Charlotte, this Charlotte possesses a high intelligence quotient and successfully utilizes ratiocination; additionally, this Charlotte must navigate her emotional intelligence and sexual awakening. This awakening is especially

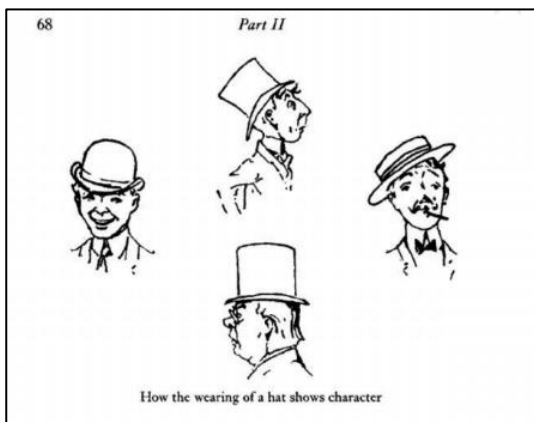


Figure 4.3. An excerpt from *Scouting for Boys* in which Baden-Powell provides instructions on how to read a man's character by the way he wears his hat.

significant because it involves rape, a traumatic experience that cannot be reconciled through intellect alone. Thus, in Cavallaro's series the detective figure is no longer some all-knowing, panoptic individual bent on restoring social order; instead, she is a feminist pushing for societal change. This Sherlock Holmes appropriation challenges readers to reexamine their assumptions concerning Western

prejudices towards rape victims, which puts Charlotte Holmes in the role of feminist protagonist.

I therefore offer Charlotte Holmes as an example of a detective figure that is radical and feminist, like Thomas's Lady Charlotte, but from another perspective.

Brittany Cavallaro first privileges Charlotte's intelligence, establishing Charlotte as a Holmesian appropriation. When Charlotte ropes Jamie into hunting for clues after Lee Dobson's murder, she informs her newfound companion that the grass around Dobson's dorm window

does not reveal any significant clues: “Four girls went by here last night in a group... You can tell by the stampede of Ugg boots. But no solo travelers... They must have entered through the front doors” (*Study* 28-29). Sherlock Holmes relies on shoe impressions in a similar manner to make deductions concerning the disappearance of the horse Silver Blaze in “The Adventure of Silver Blaze” (1892). Furthermore, Baden-Powell instructs his readers in the benefit of observing not only tracks, but other clothing choices: the way a man wears his hat, the way a man or woman walks in public, what an individual’s shoe reveals about his/her personality (see fig. 4.3). For example, someone who wears out soles and heels equally is “of business capacity and honesty”; heels worn out on the outside indicate “imagination and love of adventure”; and, “heels worn down on the inside signify weakness and indecision of character” (Baden-Powell 70). Much like Sherlock Holmes’s own inferences concerning Dr. John Watson when they first meet, Charlotte demonstrates that she has deduced several key points in Jamie’s life when she comments on his jacket:

Your jacket wasn’t always yours. It was made in the 1970s, judging from the cut and the particularly awful brown of the leather, and while it fits you well enough, it’s a touch too big in the shoulders. I’d say you’d bought it secondhand, vintage, but everything else you’re wearing was made in the last two years. So either you inherited it, or it was a gift. (*Study* 39).

Charlotte is right, of course. The jacket is from Jamie’s father; Charlotte also notes that the Magic Marker stains inside the coat’s pockets mean that Jamie has a younger sister. Jamie describes Charlotte’s deductions as “spot-on, gold star, perfect” (*Study* 40-41). As with Lady Charlotte, this twenty-first-century Charlotte establishes herself as a Holmesian figure.

While Jamie Watson is an active character in *A Study in Charlotte* (something I will examine more closely later in this chapter), Charlotte herself is the primary agent of order. Charlotte puts the clues together that lead to Nurse Bryony as Dobson’s murderer: she collects

evidence from Dobson's room, disguises herself as "Hailey" to observe Dobson's enemies, and deduces that Bryony hid the cure to Jamie's sickness¹⁵⁰ in his dorm room. She even pulls off an elaborate staged attempted kidnapping with her roommate. Charlotte sets herself up as the victim of a fake crime to ensure that Detective Shepard does not suspect either her or Jamie of the various murders and attempted murders happening on campus. Such cunning is reminiscent of Holmes's own subterfuges, like his priest disguise in "A Scandal in Bohemia" to gain entry into Irene Adler's home to discover the King of Bohemia's photograph. Jamie describes Charlotte's attention to cases as "a laser focus" (*August* 131), a phrase reminiscent of Watson's descriptions of Holmes's obsessive attention. Perhaps just as significantly, Jamie's enthusiastic enthralment with Charlotte's brilliance mirrors his predecessor's wonderment at Sherlock Holmes's skills:

Oh, she was brilliant. Like a hurtling comet you couldn't look at dead on without burning your retinas right off. Like a bioluminescent lake. She was a sixteen-year-old detective-savant who could tell your life story from a look, who retrofitted little carved boxes with surprise poison springs early on a Saturday morning when everyone else, including me, was asleep in their beds. (*Study* 150)

These parallels emphasize Charlotte's status as a Holmes adaptation.¹⁵¹ She possesses the brilliance of her progenitor and his ambitions, as Charlotte tells Jamie: "I want an agency...A detective agency, a small one...You can deal with the clients, comfort them, take notes. We'll solve them together, and I'll handle the finances, since you're so terrible at maths" (*August* 200-201). What makes Charlotte an *appropriation* is her character complexity; she must navigate her destructive drug addiction and post-traumatic stress (PTSD) from her rape experience.

Charlotte performs her "Holmesian deductions" (*Study* 145) in a transgressive body: she is a sixteen-year-old rape victim "who d[oes] coke and oxy and anything else that [isn't] bolted

¹⁵⁰ Nurse Bryony poisons Jamie at the end of *A Study in Charlotte*.

¹⁵¹ This Charlotte Holmes is also the inheritor of other teenage detectives from popular culture. Veronica Mars, for example, is a high school student who moonlights as a private investigator with the guidance of her father, a detective.

down” (*August* 220). Charlotte’s multiplicity creates room for the voice of a rape victim, a voice often ignored or significantly simplified in Anglo-American culture before and during the twentieth century but fast gaining increased significance and complexity in the twenty-first century.¹⁵² This voice is one of conflict in sociopolitical debates in relation to issues such as abortion, consent, and rape conviction (Barnett and Hilz 545). Thus, Charlotte Holmes is a case study regarding Anglo-American rape myths and their cultural influence. Rape myths are “attitudes and generally false beliefs about rape that are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Barnett and Hilz 546). Charlotte’s rape and her ratiocination define her as a character and shift the detective’s symbolic meaning. In *Framing the Rape Victim* (2014), Carine Mardorossian argues that rape is “the event women have to fear, experience, avoid, and deter whose pervasiveness...has shaped women’s bodily comportment whether they are conscious of it or not” (1). In other words, rape is a social issue that embodies prejudices towards women and affects how they see themselves. Charlotte’s post-traumatic stress and the stigmatization she experiences as a rape victim signal that Cavallaro’s series is feminist: the cerebral hero who solved her first case at ten years old is also a vulnerable teenaged girl.

Unlike her progenitor, Charlotte feels too much, which led to her drug addiction:

I was too soft on the inside, you see. No exoskeleton. I felt everything, and still everything bored me. I was like...like a radio playing five stations at once, all of them static. At first, the coke made me feel bigger. More together. Like I was one person, at last. And then it stopped working, and I began taking more, and more, and they sent me to rehab...I was wrong inside, you see...I’ve never quite managed to shake it, any of it, and my parents stopped expecting me to. (*Study* 251).

¹⁵² Another Sherlock Holmes adaptation, NBC’s *Elementary*, explores this topic as well. In Season 2, Sherlock Holmes takes on Kitty Winter (from the original ACD story “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client”) as his new protégé. Kitty is a rape victim whose abuser remains at large. While working for Sherlock, Kitty must confront her PTSD while tracking down her rapist, who is also wanted for murder.

Lee Dobson's sexual assault only amplifies Charlotte's emotional turmoil, and her relationship with Jamie exposes and explores those struggles. Charlotte first explains the rape to her new partner in a matter-of-fact manner, reminiscent of her great-great-great grandfather's language, "It happened in Stevenson. Yes, I generally do oxy here, when I do downers,¹⁵³ so that was an exception. Yes, it was immensely upsetting...No, I'd rather not tell you the details...I can fight for myself" (*Study* 53). And yet, Charlotte's inability to physically engage with Jamie on a personal, emotional level indicates that she needs help. While a sexual connection is secondary to their relationship (as Jamie himself tells the reader, "But I never wanted to be her boyfriend. I wanted something smaller than that, and far, far bigger, something I couldn't yet put into words" [*Study* 18]), their unfulfilled attraction underscores Charlotte's lingering PTSD and the toll it takes on her emotional intelligence.

Physical contact between Charlotte and Jamie bounces between platonic and romantic. At their school dance, Charlotte requests that Jamie twirl her around the dancefloor and Jamie admires Charlotte's "absolute abandon" (*Study* 106). She also does not flinch when she lies down beside Jamie in his bed after Nurse Bryony poisons him. However, when physical contact gains added, often sexual, significance, Charlotte shuts down. For example, when Charlotte climbs into Jamie's sickbed, she kisses him on the lips and follows up this kiss with a confession: "[T]hat's all – it's nearly too much for me to touch anyone, after Dobson, and I – for you, I'm trying" (*Study* 289). And Charlotte continues to try. When she and Jamie spend part of their winter break at her family house in Sussex, Charlotte asks Jamie to touch her face and that motion quickly leads to more sexual contact until, right before they kiss, Charlotte digs her elbow into Jamie's stomach in self-defense (*August* 35). Even though Jamie offers no threat to

¹⁵³ Charlotte means that she generally does oxy in Sciences 442, her private lair, and not a dorm hall like Stevenson.

Charlotte, she cannot overcome that instinctive move to protect herself from physical, sexual contact. Charlotte's frustrations in emotionally connecting with Jamie explore how rape affects an individual's psychology and wellbeing. Here, then, is where Charlotte Holmes shifts away from the Sherlock Holmes canon and Cavallaro creates a radical, feminist appropriation whose purpose is not simply to solve crimes, but to expose Anglo-American perceptions of rape.

Cavallaro confronts readers with society's instinctive need to blame the victim. Charlotte was high on oxy when Dobson raped her, and her condition left Charlotte without the willpower to consent. In a passionate exchange with Detective Shepard concerning her relationship with Dobson, Charlotte corrects the detective on this point:

[Detective Shepard] held up a hand... "Except for the part where, when we found Dobson's body, he was clutching your school library's copy of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. With one story in particular bookmarked.¹⁵⁴ Or the part where you had sex with him. Dobson." [...]

Next to me, I felt Holmes go very still. "Yes, I did...I was using a rather large amount of oxy at the time," she said coolly, "and had that come to light, I would have been expelled. Your real question should be whether the sexual act was consensual. Which, considering my impaired state, it wasn't." (47-48)

Shepard's comment directly engages with consent in sexual relations and Charlotte's response, in turn, directly engages the reader with the issue of blame. As Mardorossian argues, Western women "are now repeatedly accused of triggering if not of causing rape through their misguided behavior (drinking, partying)" (2). Charlotte's deviancy (her drug addiction) clearly plays into this cultural understanding, thereby challenging the reader to reconcile Charlotte's status as both a drug addicted-protagonist *and* victim. While Detective Shepard did not know of Charlotte's impaired condition at the time of her rape, Nurse Bryony fully endorses this societal prejudice when she reveals her role in Dobson's attack on Charlotte. Bryony details to Charlotte and Jamie

¹⁵⁴ Lee Dobson was killed in the same manner as "The Adventure of the Specked Band" (1892) and that was the story bookmarked in this library book.

that she gave Dobson information concerning oxy dosages that would make Charlotte “nonresponsive” and “pliant” for sex (*Study* 296). And the school nurse shows no remorse, calling Charlotte a “little whore”: “I had no qualms about it...I knew I wasn’t pointing him towards the innocent” (*Study* 297). Charlotte’s lack of innocence in this sentence is two-fold: first, Nurse Bryony was August Moriarty’s fiancé when Charlotte fell in love with him (and when August did not return Charlotte’s affection, she persuaded him to procure oxy for her and he was subsequently arrested); second, Charlotte is a drug addict. Nurse Bryony’s clear role as antagonist steers readers to see Charlotte and her status as a rape victim in a sympathetic light; these clear-cut lines between “good” (Charlotte) and “bad” (Bryony) indicate to the reader that Charlotte is a victim of violence, rather than a responsible party.

Unlike Lady Charlotte, Cavallaro’s Charlotte did not initiate her sexual experience. Her sexual awakening was forced on her through the violent, brutal experience of rape. This facet to Charlotte’s character contributes to her radicalism. Sherlock Holmes is no longer a figure of social stability but a figure representative of radical social transformation. The PTSD Charlotte experiences from the rape colors her ability to engage with others, but it does not dull her ratiocination. Instead, as an appropriation of Sherlock Holmes, Charlotte’s connection to Conan Doyle shifts and adds complexity to Sherlock Holmes and his significance to Anglo-American culture. Moreover, this added complexity connects Charlotte and Lady Charlotte because both appropriations work to undo societal norms that characterize some women as “good” and others as “bad.” As a woman who lost her virginity outside of marriage, Lady Charlotte is a “fallen” woman according to Victorian social standards. A Victorian woman’s moral agency was “predicated upon the denial of her sexual appetite” (Ardis 14). Lady Charlotte not only refuses to deny her sexual appetite, but examines it through a rational lens. As a separate but parallel

examination, Charlotte Holmes's drug addiction marks her as a deviant. However, instead of criminalizing or condemning this addiction, Cavallaro explores the emotional struggles that drug addicts face, as well as the struggles of a rape victim. Thus, women's experiences fuse with Conan Doyle's masculine detective canon to effectively reshape how readers understand the detective. However, one significant caveat needs to be made here: these two Charlotte Holmes characters are *white* and *extraordinary*. While Sherry Thomas herself is a Chinese author and Cavallaro includes Lena Gupta, a woman of color, the fact that both Charlotte Holmes characters retain their privileged racial status perpetuates the mythical figure of the white, Western detective. Additionally, both Charlotte Holmes appropriations possess the radicalism of the progenitor and his uncanny ratiocination; while both attributes contribute to the Charlotte Holmes characters' appeal, such attributes also perpetuate this idea that characters worthy of study must be extraordinary in some way to deserve study and attention.

According to Dr. John Watson, Sherlock Holmes finds emotions distracting and without use. Lady Charlotte Holmes and Charlotte Holmes's complexity contradicts such assertions. The detective figure is no longer simply a machine of social order; instead, she is both a ratiocinative machine *and* a radical, feminist character. Thus, both series emphasize detective fiction's increasing attention not to its conservative roots, but to its elasticity (Humann 16).¹⁵⁵ Given the detective figure's immense amount of knowledge and power, s/he can either be a figure of social and cultural conservatism and transgression. Here, the detective is a radical, transgressive figure.

Interpersonal Relationships & Emotional Intelligence

Recent research in the field of psychology supports the hypothesis that "social

¹⁵⁵ Please refer to my introduction regarding the detective genre's traditional conservatism and the shift currently happening in the twenty-first-century.

connections that are grounded in shared group membership and associated social identities have a particularly profound protective effect on individual health and well-being” (Greenway et al. 294). The more secure one’s social bonds, the better one’s self-esteem. Belonging to a group requires interpersonal skills, a skillset often defined as “the ability to be aware of, understand and to appreciate others’ feelings as well as to establish and maintain mutually satisfying and responsible relationships with others” (Bar-On et al. 1108). This ability to cultivate interpersonal skills and foster group membership differentiates the Charlotte Holmes characters from their progenitor. Their attention to affective friendships and partnerships emphasizes the significance of emotional intelligence. In other words, Thomas and Cavallaro’s appropriations explore the nearly universal need “to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of interpersonal relationships” (Baumeister and Leary 499) to achieve a sense of self-worth. While Sherlock Holmes may have been a rational, intelligent island unto himself, these Charlotte Holmeses develop an emotional intelligence that rivals their ratiocination. Here, then, the difference between adaptation and appropriation makes itself felt. An emphasis not specifically on casework but on relationships developed *through* casework denotes a radical shift from canon to appropriation and, as a result, IQ and ratiocination are not the apex of detective work.

Contributing to this difference between Conan Doyle’s original Sherlock Holmes and these recent adaptations is a shift in narrative focus. The Sherlock Holmes canon is a canon of casework, not relationships. Interpersonal relationships are superficial at best, including that between Holmes and Watson. These two men exist in a symbiotic relationship characterized by stasis. Readers do not engross themselves in the canon for the sake of complex character development, but rather for the casework in and of itself. This stasis is true not only for Holmes and Watson, but also for their secondary relationships. Mary Watson, as demonstrated in my first

and second chapters, lacks agency and character development despite a promising start in “The Sign of the Four.” The same sentiment applies to Mycroft Holmes. Sherlock Holmes’s elder brother remains an unknown entity until “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter.” During a casual conversation between detective and doctor, Holmes notes that his “faculty of observation” is hereditary and that his brother Mycroft possesses it “in a larger degree” than himself (406). Watson is shocked: after almost ten years together, he did not know that Holmes even had a brother. While Mycroft plays a significant role in “Greek Interpreter,” he quickly fades out of view. Thomas and Cavallaro do not hold fast to this inattention to interpersonal relationships. Instead, the novelists work to promote and explore character development not just between the Holmes and Watson appropriations, but with secondary characters as well. These interpersonal relationships therefore become focal points. In other words, while solving murder(s) is still a plot device that pulls the narrative to its conclusion, the *Lady Sherlock* and *Charlotte Holmes* series consider relationship development an equally important attribute.

Dr. John Watson & His Appropriations

In “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Sherlock Holmes refers to John Watson as his “Boswell” when the King of Bohemia arrives at Baker Street: “Stay where you are. I am lost without my Boswell” (Conan Doyle 147). Holmes is referencing James Boswell (1740-1795), best remembered for his biography of Samuel Johnson. While a noted lawyer and diarist in his own right, Boswell’s identification as “biographer of Samuel Johnson” in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* identifies a hierarchy between Johnson and Boswell that privileges Johnson over Boswell: one is performing the work, the other preserving it. As Sherlock Holmes’s narrator, a parallel hierarchy applies to Dr. John Watson: by referring to a well-known biographer in “Scandal,” Holmes implies that Watson’s role is *also* that of biographer.

This inequality finds its base in Conan Doyle's narrative construction. As I discussed in my introduction to this dissertation, Holmes's centrality to Conan Doyle's narrative construction means that the detective is the active agent; he takes on the cases, solves the mysterious, and returns to 221B Baker Street.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, Holmes's agency stands in stark contrast to Watson's passivity and where Holmes is observant, Watson is blind. Watson's status as Holmes's foil (Orel 36), however, does not mean Watson lacks significance. Watson's narration guides readers who "cannot solve the mystery and must wait for Sherlock Holmes to explain" his solutions (Toadvine 53). Watson and his ignorance, therefore, are integral to readers' clarity about each case: if Sherlock Holmes is alone, he does not need to explain his methods aloud, as he already perfectly understands the case. As renowned English crime novelist Dorothy L. Sayers emphasizes, "The beauty of Watson was, of course, that after thirty years he still did not know Holmes's methods" (108). Watson's inability to harness and apply Holmes's methods means that Watson always requires an explanation from Holmes, which in turn means the reader always has a clear explanation of Holmes's deductions and solutions. Thus, Watson plays two integral roles in the canon: narrator and fanboy.¹⁵⁷ As the narrator, readers see Sherlock Holmes's deductions and cases as "some *tour-de-force* of analytical reasoning" (to quote "The Adventure of the Resident Patient" [1893]). They do so because Dr. Watson portrays the detective and his ratiocination in such a light. As Conan Doyle himself stated, "those who consider Watson to be a fool are simply admitting that they haven't read the stories attentively" (qtd. in Toadvine 48).

¹⁵⁶ 221B Baker Street is always Holmes's residence. Watson, by contrast, only resides there in between his marriages.

¹⁵⁷ I use "fanboy" in its twenty-first-century context: an extreme fan or follower of a particular medium or concept, such as a television series, movie franchise, or individual. These individuals are also known a lack of objectivity in relation to their preferred focus.

Furthermore, the doctor's "hero-worship attitude" (Krawczyk-Żywko 136) or fanboyish conception of the consulting detective ignites and fosters readers' idolization of Sherlock Holmes. Watson is often "considerably startled" (Conan Doyle 13) by Holmes's deductions ("You reasoned it out beautifully," I exclaimed in unfeigned admiration" ["The Red-Headed League"]) and Watson's constant emphasis on Holmes's great deductive leaps and ratiocination influence the reader to think that Holmes is indeed a mastermind in detection. Thus, Watson's role as Holmes's biographer is a complex one: while Watson does not possess Holmes's ratiocination or popular eccentricities, the doctor is, nevertheless, an integral and influential force for the Sherlock Holmes canon and its readers.

This inequality remains a constant element throughout the Sherlock Holmes canon because neither Holmes nor Watson *learn* from one another. While the Holmes-Watson bond is clearly sympathetic and close (as my first chapter argued), this bond experiences little growth over the sixty stories in the canon. Thomas and Cavallaro disrupt this imbalance and create appropriations that challenge the traditional construction of the Sherlock Holmes canon through the acts of interpolation and critique (Sanders 35). With the introduction of radical, feminist Charlotte Holmes characters, Thomas and Cavallaro critique the Sherlock Holmes canon's reliance on stasis in interpersonal relationships.

Lady Charlotte Holmes & Mrs. Watson

Sherry Thomas's two female embodiments of Holmes and Watson create an opportunity to explore a female-female relationship. As Sharon Marcus argues in *Between Women* (2007), Victorian female relationships were complex entities that cannot be reduced to "heterosexual," "homosocial" or "homosexual." Marcus attributes this lack of resolution to several key points: first, historians have no firm evidence to answer the question "Did they have sex?" (43); second,

understanding friendship (and the term in and of itself) is complex with varied meaning that lies on a spectrum from heterosexual friendship to erotic infatuation to female marriage; and third, the interchangeable nature of the word “love” with similar phrases indicates “how often women used the language of physical attraction to describe their feelings for women,” both platonic and sexual (55). Female friendship, in short, “allowed middle-class women to enjoy another privilege that scholars have assumed only men could indulge – the opportunity to display affection and experience pleasurable physical contact outside of marriage without any loss of respectability” (Marcus 57). This spectrum of a woman’s feelings towards another woman emphasizes the vast nuances available to both Victorian and contemporary authors.

I argue that Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson’s relationship embodies the spirit of a Victorian female marriage because their relationship fulfills a number of requirements for this marriage. According to Marcus, a female marriage performs the work “assigned to sexuality in the nineteenth century” (194). In other words, these marriages engage in the same commitments associated with and required of heterosexual marriage: “the management of shared households, the transmission of property, the expression of emotional and religious affect, and the development and care of the self” (Marcus 194). When Mrs. Watson initially takes on Lady Charlotte as a companion and subsequently as a partner in the Sherlock Holmes business, the two women nurture a relationship much like that of a female marriage.

Firstly, Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Holmes set up not one, but two houses together: their home at Mrs. Watson’s residence in Regent’s Street, as well as 18 Upper Baker Street. Mrs. Watson initially proposes that Lady Charlotte take on the role of lady’s companion and the young woman accepts but admits to herself that she is “ill suited” for such a role (*Scarlet Women* 168, 171). However, this arrangement is temporary: as soon as Mrs. Watson discovers that Lady

Charlotte is behind “Sherlock Holmes,” the widow is quick to act on Lady Charlotte’s gifts. In fact, Mrs. Watson is entirely a woman of business when outlining her plans concerning the detective agency:

Beyond paid advertisements, you will need an office, some cards and stationery, three quid a year to rent that private box at the post office, and of course all manner of incidentals – people always fail to plan for the incidentals. It is beyond your means now to set yourself up properly, but not beyond mine. [18 Upper Baker Street] can be your office. I will foot the rest of the upfront expenses and take a cut of your fees as my recompense. (*Scarlet Women* 208)

Mrs. Watson does not make the mistake of underestimating Lady Charlotte’s abilities and consequently charges their first client three times the agreed price (*Scarlet Women* 229). What evolves from this investment is a symbiotic household: Lady Charlotte takes on clients as “Sherlock Holmes,” solves those cases, and the two women split the fees. This arrangement is enormously successful. A steady stream of clients acts as an undercurrent throughout both *A Study in Scarlet Women* and *A Conspiracy in Belgravia*. In their downtime, Mrs. Watson and Lady Charlotte live at the Regent’s Street location as friends and colleagues.

Secondly, this cohabitation is egalitarian. In the Victorian Era, women frequently lost their right to their own property or money after marriage. The doctrine of coverture denied married women any sort of economic autonomy (Marcus 194), a condition Lady Charlotte admits that she dreads: “I fear always being beholden to someone else. I want to be independent – and I want to earn that independence” (*Scarlet Women* 165). In her “marriage” to Mrs. Watson, Charlotte keeps the income that she earns from “Sherlock Holmes” and hence her independence. Lady Charlotte appreciates and respects Mrs. Watson’s talents, particularly noting how she “come[s] alive” while renovating 18 Upper Baker Street into a bedridden bachelor’s residence (*Scarlet Women* 176). Mrs. Watson also *teaches* Lady Charlotte. To avoid outing Sherlock Holmes as a myth, Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson hatch a plan regarding how they will receive

clients: Charlotte will act as Sherlock's sister and Mrs. Watson will be the housekeeper. As sister and housekeeper, the two women will meet with customers, including Inspector Treadles. When Inspector Treadles and Lord Ingram (who has decided to accompany Treadles¹⁵⁸ to 18 Upper Baker Street) first visit "Sherlock Holmes" at his residence, Lady Charlotte (as Sherlock's sister) informs the gentlemen that Sherlock is indisposed in the adjoining bedroom. She then explains to the visitors that she will relay information to and from Sherlock because Sherlock will be able to hear their conversations in the parlor from a listening device situated in his bedroom. Treadles requests proof that Sherlock Holmes can provide the help he requires to solve the mysterious deaths of Lady Shrewsbury and Mr. Sackville. In response, Lady Charlotte "consults" with Sherlock and comes back with this message for Inspector Treadles:

You come from the northwest, Cumbria. Barrow-in-Furness. Your father was employed by either the steelworks or the shipyard. The shipyard, most likely. He was Scottish, your mother wasn't. He did well enough to send you to a good school, but unfortunately he died young and you weren't able to go to university. (*Scarlet Women* 183).

Charlotte relays other intimate details: Treadles' wife sacrificed a life of comfort to marry him, but they are both resourceful and fond of each other. Treadles expresses his astonishment and Charlotte replies that such observations are "fairly obvious" (*Scarlet Women* 184). The insights into Treadles' childhood come not from Sherlock/Charlotte, but from Mrs. Watson, acting as housekeeper to "Sherlock Holmes," who possesses the ability to identify specific regional accents. This first proof of Sherlock Holmes's ratiocination comes not from his creator, Lady Charlotte, but from the combined knowledge of both Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson. As Lady Charlotte tells Lord Ingram after the inspector takes his leave, "[Mrs. Watson's] very convincing, isn't she? And she's the one who identified the inspector's origin by his accent. I must have her

¹⁵⁸ A brief reminder: Lord Ingram introduced Inspector Treadles to Sherlock Holmes; therefore, he knows Sherlock Holmes's true identity.

train me to better hear the differences in regional accents” (*Scarlet Women* 195). Thus, Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson’s relationship is a true partnership of equals, as opposed to the detective-sidekick dynamic in the Sherlock Holmes canon.

Thirdly, an affective companionship exists between the two women. On Mrs. Watson’s part, she wishes to foster both Lady Charlotte’s professional life and self-confidence. To that end, Mrs. Watson teaches Lady Charlotte not to undervalue or underestimate herself, “Remind yourself that you’re far more likely to undercharge than overcharge, my dear, because you don’t yet understand your own value and you’ve never been taught to demand your full worth” (*Scarlet Women* 230). Mrs. Watson’s active efforts to ensure Lady Charlotte’s success are endearing and indicate that, while the widow is quite businesslike, her attachment to the young detective is not solely entrepreneurial. This attachment is, in fact, quite emotional, as the reader learns in *A Conspiracy in Belgravia* when Mrs. Watson feels uneasy about taking on Lady Ingram as a client,¹⁵⁹ “[S]he didn’t know how to change Miss Holmes’s mind without a draconian invocation of authority: *I finance this operation, therefore my word is law*...If anything, Mrs. Watson was keen to reassure [Charlotte] that their partnership – and friendship – was genuine, an expression of mutual respect and affection” (37). Despite Mrs. Watson’s qualms over their new client, she has enough respect and affection for Lady Charlotte not to abuse her financial power in this new business. And Lady Charlotte reciprocates this affection. She comments that “being Sherlock Holmes’s business partner had made Mrs. Watson busy – and buoyant. It gladdened Charlotte to no end” (*Scarlet Women* 297). This sentiment is not

¹⁵⁹ This uneasiness arises from several facts: first, Lady Ingram is the one person who stands in the way of Lady Charlotte and Lord Ingram’s love for one another; second, Mrs. Watson is very attached to Lord Ingram herself and knows that his wife has made him an unhappy man. Lady Ingram would also recognize both Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson, and therefore they must employ Mrs. Watson’s niece, Penelope Redmayne, to act as Sherlock Holmes’s sister.

diminished once Lady Charlotte discovers Mrs. Watson's true relationship with Lord Ingram. She does not blame Mrs. Watson for her role in Lord Ingram's schemes after the affair with Roger Shrewsbury and tells Mrs. Watson so: "I was on my own for a short while – I have not forgotten what that was like. The life I lead now is a luxury. You make that life possible, ma'am...I'm not sorry that I have someone who worries for me" (*Conspiracy* 142). Thus, Lady Charlotte also considers their arrangement both a partnership and a friendship. These qualities that define Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson's living arrangements embody the egalitarianism and greater spousal freedom that Victorian British activists encouraged in man-woman marriages and that Sharon Marcus sees in Victorian female marriages (206). Sherry Thomas therefore rewrites a hierarchical homosocial bond between two men into a devoted and equal partnership between two women.

A final comment on the women's living arrangements: both are transgressive individuals in and of themselves and choosing to set up a house and business together challenges Victorian social and cultural mores and provokes readers to examine these women as combative social agents. Mrs. Watson was once a stage performer – Lady Charlotte deduces as much from both the widow's clothing and her voice and movement, which "speak of [the] training and control" (*Scarlet Women* 154) necessary for the stage. Furthermore, Mrs. Watson does not try to hide her past, as Charlotte observes in the widow's living room:

The photographs told a different story altogether. Charlotte, no stranger to flouting conventional mores these days, was more than a little taken aback by images of a young Mrs. Watson in "hose and breeches." A woman's lower limbs were always enshrouded by layers of skirts. Even bloomers, worn by the brave and athletic few, were purposefully billowy, to hide the exact form of the wearer. (*Scarlet Women* 164)

While theater and other live entertainments were popular during the Victorian Era, attendance at such events "was seen as unrespectable by a large portion of the middle class" (Steinbach 179).

While some actresses and actors attained respectability,¹⁶⁰ by and large these professionals “had been seen by Victorians as far less than respectable, given that their profession involved behaving falsely (that is, acting) and selling access to their bodies (in performance)” (Steinbach 183). Lady Charlotte herself is also a transgressive figure: she purposefully seeks out a married man to lose her virginity, thereby challenging the sexual double standard that categorized women as without sexual impulses and men as overly sexual creatures (Steinbach 135). She herself holds no illusions as to her status: “[Lady] Charlotte’s mind had to be one of the finest in the land, but she was and would forever be a woman who had lost her respectability. A pariah.” (*Scarlet Women* 59). Two transgressive women setting up not only a house, but also a business together, flouts Victorian social and cultural mores. Thus Thomas not only rewrites the Sherlock Holmes canon, but a Victorian woman’s life as well.

In writing this series, Thomas deviates from the Victorian literary convention of the marriage plot, which underscored heterosexual marriage “as the only logical outcome, as inevitable, climatic, and conclusive” (Dever 158). Instead, Thomas explores what I define as a homage to the Victorian female marriage. This shift in focus underscores the significance of female relationships and creates a feminist text that challenges Victorian mores. While Marcus does rightly argue that Victorian female friendships oftentimes worked to broker heterosexual marriages (26), Lady Charlotte and Mrs. Watson’s affective relationship instead focuses on fostering an egalitarian and professional lifestyle. This symbiosis reveals that both found a place in a world where women, particularly transgressive women, often possess limited choices.

¹⁶⁰ For example, Henry Irving (1838-1905) was granted a knighthood in 1895, indicating that after “years of campaigning to have theatre recognized on the same plane of respectability and artistry as were painting and music” this entertainment was now respectable (Steinbach 183). (Though, he was also a man and acted in Shakespearean drama, two points Mrs. Watson does not have going for her.)

Charlotte Holmes & Jamie Watson

This aversion to the Boswellian sidekick is also a key component in Cavallaro's Charlotte-Jamie relationship. Here, I read this relationship as feminist and queer because Charlotte and Jamie challenge Anglo-American traditions of masculine and feminine roles. Specifically, Jamie possesses the affective role of care, challenging the "male breadwinner model" (Bergeron 195). Jamie, as a result, is a feminist character whose status as caregiver queers traditional male-female relationships (Kirsch 33). He performs this role in two areas of Charlotte's life: first, in combating societal victim-blaming; and second, in providing her with a friendship based on loyalty and compassion without ulterior motive. Jamie's care fosters a sense of belongingness in Charlotte.

Jamie provides the "physical and emotional work of care giving" (107) that feminist scholar Christina Hughes identifies as an area of consistency in feminist rhetoric regarding care. Theorists and psychologists often divide "care" into four categories: caring about, taking care of, care giving, and care receiving (C. Hughes 109). Jamie's attention to Charlotte's position as a rape victim and her general emotional wellbeing fulfills these categories. In engaging with this first point of care, Jamie acts as a combative agent against victim-blaming. Readers first see this care after Charlotte corrects Detective Shepard regarding her sexual relations with Dobson. Jamie's father tells his son, "You mustn't blame her for this, you know"; Jamie's response is both compassionate and loyal: "I'd never blame Holmes for this. It isn't her fault" (*Study* 50). Jamie's stance is part feminist and part liberal (both of which can and will overlap in sociopolitical debates). Psychologists often utilize a tool called moral foundations theory to examine morality, which examines individuals based on five foundations of moral decision-making: "harm/care, fairness/reciprocity, in-group loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity"

(Barnett and Hilz 546). Utilizing this scale, liberals “tend to prioritize the rights of the individual,” which leads them to frequently “focus on the harm and injustice (i.e., individualizing foundations) that has been done to individual rape victims, engaging in lower levels of stereotyping victims and excusing rapists” (Barnett and Hilz 546). Jamie exhibits this same liberal sentiment when he defends Charlotte against his father’s supposition that Jamie would blame Charlotte for the rape. Jamie’s reactions to Charlotte’s family and their response to her rape further solidify his care role:

“They think this sort of thing shouldn’t’ve happened to me at all,” [Charlotte] whispered.
“Not to someone as...capable as me.”
“This isn’t your fault,” I said fiercely. “God. Has no one told you it’s not your fault? Of all the fucked-up families in all the world –”
“It was never said, as such. It was implied.”
“Like that makes it any better.” (*August* 36).

While Emma and Alistair Holmes are not necessarily antagonists, they clearly represent a more conservative mindset that frustrates Jamie. Jamie’s role here as Charlotte’s caring advocate is one of social justice, another significant aspect of feminist theoretical work on care (C. Hughes 123). Jamie actively combats societal prejudice to blame rape victims and claims a moral high ground that distinguishes him from Detective Shepard and Charlotte’s parents. Jamie’s actions then contextualize Charlotte’s PTSD in a wider conversation than that of a fictional universe: Jamie makes the argument that rape is not the fault of the victim, but the fault of perpetrator.

Jamie’s attentive care also takes the form of physically tending to Charlotte’s health and her sobriety. After a school dance, for example, Jamie and Charlotte take a drive to a local diner where Jamie insists Charlotte order a full meal of pancakes, bacon, and eggs instead of plain toast (*Study* 85). Charlotte rarely has more than “the appetite of a hummingbird” (*Study* 54) according to Jamie and his attempts to make her eat more indicates his concern for her wellbeing. While Western society usually perceives women as “responsible for the physical and

emotional work of caregivers” (C. Hughes 107), in Cavallaro’s series Jamie takes on that role and disrupts readers’ expectations regarding traditional masculine and feminine roles. While this idea of care might seem patriarchal at times, I counter such a critique with the point that Jamie is providing Charlotte with the support that she does not receive from the other people in her life, such as her roommate Lena and, more significantly, her parents. Furthermore, Jamie understands his boundaries. In the throes of their investigation at Sherringford, Jamie notes that Charlotte’s “eyes were somehow both glassy and dry...her hair ma[king] a crackling sound that hair really shouldn’t make”; yet he “ke[eps] stifling the urge to ask her if she was okay, to touch her forehead to see if she had a fever” (*Study* 175). Jamie acknowledges that he cannot control Charlotte or force her down a particular path and tries to respect both her intellectual process and independence.

One of Jamie’s primary missions in *Study* is to keep Charlotte away from hard drugs; as he tells his reader, “We’d reached an unspoken agreement: she’d dump the pill bottles, and I’d stop checking for them” (72). When Charlotte does relapse, Jamie finds her hidden under his father’s porch like “a beaten dog” after she consumed a large quantity of oxy she had for “rainy days” (*Study* 246-47). Jamie sits with Charlotte as she cycles out of the oxy to ensure that she does not harm herself. He stays with Charlotte even as she verbally abuses him, saying “You’re nothing to me” and “claw[ing] at [his] injured palm with her nails” (*Study* 246, 247). Such a commitment emphasizes his devotion to the caregiver role and to ensuring that Charlotte has a place to belong. Belongingness and its needs are not more important than needs like food and safety, but it does “take precedence over esteem and self-actualization” (Baumeister and Leary 497). As this analysis indicates, the components of caregiving and belongingness foster a relationship between Charlotte and Jamie that is affective. As a result, Jamie is not a foil to

Charlotte but an active agent in their relationship.

Moreover, during Charlotte's oxy cycle under Jamie's dad's porch, time loses its meaning to Jamie and this loss of time is a small but significant detail when examined from a feminist lens. Feminist scholars have argued that linear, or clock, time is masculine because "the emergence of the mechanical clock served religious, state, economic and capitalist interests in the Western world" (C. Hughes 134). For example, in Victorian London, the separate spheres mentality meant that men were expected to work and women stay at home. While a man's duties might end at the close of his work day, a woman's work was not governed specifically by a clock in/clock out schedule. Thus, this time benefits men's lives because the organization "of paid work into strict linear time accords with an assumption that there are no other forms of time that impact on an individual's life"; consequently, feminists argue for alternative forms of measuring time (C. Hughes 136). In this specific scene of *Study*, Jamie notes that under his father's porch the "world slowed to a standstill" (248) and time does not gain meaning until they re-enter the Jamie's father's house. Hours, minutes, or even seconds do not bind Jamie's time; instead, Jamie measures time in terms of Charlotte's recovery from the oxy.

Charlotte realizes Jamie's care and he receives her care in return. As Jamie comments to himself after Charlotte tries to pick a fight with him out of frustration, "I thought of the Cadbury Flake on my desk, the time she leaned over to straighten my glasses in the middle of a conversation. She was either much better or much worse at this whole caring business than she thought" (*Study* 201). Gifting Jamie with his favorite candy and those other intimate gestures underscore Charlotte's developing emotional intelligence.¹⁶¹ Charlotte also introduces Jamie as "my friend and colleague" to Milo when her brother shows up to help them with Bryony (*Study*

¹⁶¹ As a tangential but relevant note: this development in EQ intelligence echoes Sherlock's own increased attention to Joan's feelings in NBC's *Elementary* (please reference my introduction for a more nuanced analysis).

266), another signal on Charlotte's part that she appreciates and respects Jamie's role in her life. She admits to Jamie that she enjoys sharing his life when she spends winter break with Jamie and his mother in London after the Bryony Downs case: "I like your flat because you grew up here...and I like eating your dinner because it's yours, which makes it better than mine. And I like your sister because she's smart, and she worships you, which means she's *very* smart" (*August* 13). Again, Charlotte shows her appreciation for Jamie and even describes such appreciation with the emotive word "like" several times in one sentence. This reciprocity, while not a perfect balance (as Jamie is well-adjusted and lacks both a drug addiction and dark past concerning a former maths tutor¹⁶²), does provide both teenagers with a sense of belonging and thereby fosters their emotional attachment to one another.

Psychology's belongingness hypothesis posits that "social bonds should form relatively easily, without requiring specially conducive circumstances" (Baumeister and Leary 501). Charlotte and Jamie's relationship meets this requirement. While one can argue that their bond forms under *very* conducive circumstances (they are both accused of involvement in Dobson's murder), this bond forms with great ease. When Jamie stumbles upon Charlotte shortly after hearing about Dobson's murder, she is coming back from burgling the chemistry lab for pipettes. Jamie's response is one of utter enjoyment: "You absolute *nerd*... You have a lab? Wait, no. Later. Because Dobson's dead, and we're easily the prime suspects, and we're *laughing*" (*Study* 26). Their obvious ease with one another only increases, as Jamie reflects,

The way we were with each other wouldn't have made sense to anyone else if I'd tried to explain it. I had a habit of volleying any ridiculous statement she'd make back over the

¹⁶² As a further point, Jamie briefly exhibits a loneliness that underscores his own vulnerability: "Ever since I had come to Sherringford, I'd existed in a state of constant loneliness without ever actually being alone. Privacy was an illusion at a boarding school. There was always another body in the room, and if there wasn't one could enter at any moment. Being Holmes's friend might have taken the edge off that loneliness, but it didn't dissipate entirely." (*Study* 206). While Jamie soon banishes these thoughts when the sciences building (and therefore Holmes's lab) bursts into flames, this moment is nevertheless significant because it acknowledges that an imbalance between the two protagonists exists.

net with a top spin, and we'd ramp ourselves up into fierce arguments that way about beetles and Christmas plays and the color of Dr. Watson's eyes. (*Study* 65).

This bond goes beyond even suspicion of murder as Jamie narrates to the reader, "I wrinkled my nose at her, and she hit me in the arm. God help me. I couldn't stay mad at her, even if she turned out to be a cold-blooded killer. I was in way, way too deep" (*Study* 136). Jamie found his social identity as Charlotte's best friend and partner. While critics might argue that belonging unconditionally to someone who could be a murderer is not healthy, in this context I would argue that such is not the case. Jamie is fulfilling a literary inevitability that ultimately brings him a fulfilling friendship just like that of his great-great-great grandfather.

Once solidified, these belongingness bonds are difficult to break (Baumeister and Leary 503). Jamie's commitment to Charlotte rises to the challenge of drug addiction, suspicion, and even emotional isolation. While their relationship is often tested in both *A Study in Charlotte* and *The Last of August*, Jamie and Charlotte never want their connection to end. In his moments of frustration, Jamie often comments that he feels like Charlotte's valet (*Study* 155) or pet (*August* 17), but he always stays with her. Charlotte reciprocates this attachment. Even in the midst of her oxy high and her abuse towards Jamie's presence under the porch, Charlotte promises him, "I would never let you die" (*Study* 253). *The Last of August* ends with a significant scene: before the epilogue, Jamie observes to the reader that the sound he hears are sirens, "a cacophony of sirens, and by the time the red and blue lights reached the top of the drive, Charlotte Holmes and I were alone" (*August* 312). This ending represents their belongingness to one another and their relationship's (up to this point in the series¹⁶³) endurance.

As a final point in this conversation of belongingness, this bond produces positive affective emotional responses (Baumeister and Leary 505). In other words, belongingness

¹⁶³ I make this caveat because the third book in this series is in circulation but does not factor into this analysis.

increases one's emotional satisfaction. This satisfaction is reciprocal for Charlotte and Jamie. For example, Charlotte calls herself "the world's foremost Jamie Watson scholar" (*Study* 164) and tells the reader in her epilogue to *Study*:

A final note on Watson. He flagellates himself rather a lot, as this narrative shows. He shouldn't. He is lovely and warm and quite brave and a bit heedless of his own safety and by any measure the best man I've ever known. I've discovered that I am very clever when it comes to caring about him, and so I will continue to do so. (320-321)

Charlotte's resolution represents her growth during *A Study in Charlotte*: she is no longer a closed-off, combative teenager with a drug problem but a caring and intelligent amateur detective. She has, in short, attained belongingness's emotional component (Baumeister and Leary 505) and produced a positive, affective attachment to another individual. Thus, Cavallaro's Charlotte Holmes offers the Sherlock Holmes canon a new way to interpret the quintessential Holmes-Watson relationship: one that is emotive, affective, and dynamic.

Jamie Watson's role as caregiver defies traditional gender roles because "feminist research on the social identity of the person who undertakes and is perceived to be primarily responsible for care in society" overwhelmingly points to women (C. Hughes 113). Cavallaro's series directly challenges this notion by fusing the two concepts of care and belongingness together into an adolescent boy. Jamie's ability to nurture Charlotte's belongingness breaks gender binaries and confronts readers' expectations of the Watson character. Feminist scholarship has been attentive to "the ways in which activities associated with femininity are devalued," thereby illuminating "how the power of gender operates within and across the spheres of care and formal and informal economies" (Bergeron 200). Jamie's role exemplifies equality rather than hierarchy, and therefore contributes to Cavallaro's radical, feminist novels.

Both Thomas and Cavallaro craft affective, feminist appropriations of Dr. John Watson. These Watson appropriations are, furthermore, more realistic than Conan Doyle's original

character because Mrs. Watson's and Jamie's relationships with their respective Charlotte Holmeses embody the universal human need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 499). This attention to belonging and the affective care that blossoms from such relationships generates multiplicity in these characters: Mrs. Watson is not just a transgressive retired actress, but also a business woman and supportive partner to Lady Charlotte; Jamie Watson is not just a teenaged boy with conflicting platonic and sexual feelings towards his new best friend, but also a feminist advocate for rape victims and a nurturing caregiver.

Secondary Characters & Interpersonal Relationships

As stated in my introduction to this chapter, Thomas and Cavallaro attend to not just the Holmes-Watson partnership, but to relationships with secondary characters. These relationships, and specifically these *female* relationships, further remove masculinity and man's presence from both series' focal points. As with the Charlotte Holmes characters, when Thomas and Cavallaro develop secondary female characters, they create women-centered narratives that go beyond Conan Doyle's inclusion of a scattered few "New Woman" characters in the Sherlock Holmes canon. In the case of Lady Charlotte, her devotion to her two sisters further exemplifies her emotional development and places her in the traditionally masculine role of familial provider. Charlotte Holmes's relationship with Lena, on the other hand, can be queered per Kirsch's lens to further complicate both Charlotte's sexuality and the increased attention to women's experiences. Although not as fully developed as the John Watson appropriations, these secondary characters carry weight that complicates the Sherlock Holmes canon and its legacy.

Lady Charlotte, Livia, and Bernadine

Lady Charlotte has three sisters: Henrietta, Livia, and Bernadine. Of these three, Lady

Charlotte concerns herself with Livia and Bernadine,¹⁶⁴ both of whom possess characteristics that mark them as different and therefore deviant in Victorian society. Livia is twenty-seven years old with “eight Seasons under her belt and no marital prospects whatsoever” (*Scarlet Women* 12). Livia’s unsuccessful attempts at finding a husband mark her as a pariah, as an unmarried woman was a cause for anxiety in Victorian England (K. Hughes 31). Furthermore, Livia suffers from debilitating insecurities. She feels panic at the thought of “ending up an indigent old maid unwanted by any and all relations, spending her days in a grimy boarding house, subsisting on only bread and boiled cabbage”; and experiences “states of uncontrollable anxiety” (*Scarlet Women* 81). Bernadine’s mental health is more perilous. Livia notes that Bernadine does not speak and by the age of nine “was no longer taken on family outings.” Bernadine also suffers from seizures and requires constant supervision (*Scarlet Women* 14, 24). Livia is Bernadine’s only caretaker, and the reader learns that Bernadine experiences significant mental challenges:

Bernadine had been almost eighteen when she learned to use a spoon. And she wielded that spoon on food that had already been cut into small pieces with no more grace and accuracy than a two-year-old. But that had been progress for Bernadine, mind-boggling progress. [...] Three days after Charlotte left, Bernadine had stopped feeding herself...And Livia, who thought she’d given up on Bernadine long ago, had wept, hard, racking sobs that would not stop, all the despair in her heart condensing into a singular misery. (*Conspiracy* 65)

While Livia only refers to this mental state as “Bernadine’s condition” (*Scarlet Women* 60), readers can insinuate that Bernadine lives with a disability. Livia and Bernadine’s mental conditions mean that they are at a disadvantage in a society that prioritizes conformity, marriage, and childrearing in women.

The novels emphasize Lady Charlotte’s attachment to her sisters. While Bernadine’s

¹⁶⁴ Charlotte has no need to worry about her older sister, Henrietta, as she happily follows society’s conventions. She marries a Mr. Cumberland.

condition makes Livia “both dejected and angry – at God himself,” Lady Charlotte is more tranquil and speaks to Bernadine as an adult (*Scarlet Women* 60). Whenever she sneaks back into the Holmes residence to visit Livia, Lady Charlotte often visits Bernadine as well. And when Livia succumbs to her fits of anxiety, Lady Charlotte always brings her sister “a heaping plate of buttered toast and hot tea laced with brandy” and reads from *Jane Eyre*,¹⁶⁵ Livia’s favorite book (which Charlotte cannot stand, “finding it too dense with high emotion and melodrama” [*Scarlet Women* 82]). Lady Charlotte has also learned “that it ma[kes] Livia feel less alone, less despair stricken, to be gently stroked on the back. Or embraced. Or patted on the arm”; and, while “Charlotte was not naturally inclined to physical closeness,” she comforts her sister in that manner (*Scarlet Women* 232). Again, such emotional intelligence highlights Lady Charlotte’s multiplicity: she is no longer simply a consulting detective, but also a sister.

Acting as provider and caregiver to Livia and Bernadine factors into Lady Charlotte’s motivation to work and achieve economic independence. This goal is the primary reason Lady Charlotte considers Lord Bancroft’s proposal, as I briefly discussed in my character analysis of Lady Charlotte. This attention to economic security places Lady Charlotte into the role of breadwinner: a traditionally masculine role in Anglo-American societies and an almost solely masculine role in Victorian society. Instead of “bartering the use of [her] reproductive system for a man’s support” (*Scarlet Women* 29), Lady Charlotte attempts to use it in the service of women’s socioeconomic independence. Thus, Lady Charlotte fulfills Sturgeon-Dodsworth’s mandate that Neo-Victorian texts produce feminist characters that combat Victorian gender roles.

¹⁶⁵ *Jane Eyre* in itself is an interesting (and telling) choice for Thomas to make. Charlotte Brontë’s 1847 novel is a transgressive, feminist, and at times irreligious text. Choosing it as Livia’s favorite novel further marks this sister as a transgressive individual. It is also not surprising that Charlotte cannot stand this novel: it is very emotional and dramatic, and her dislike should not be construed as conservatism but rather as a part of her analytic inclinations.

Charlotte Holmes & Lena

While Sherlock Holmes voices fondness for his brother Mycroft and maintains professional relationships with various Scotland Yard employees, Dr. Watson is his only intimate companion. However, Cavallaro's Charlotte Holmes has her roommate, Lena Gupta, who offers the young detective alternative companionship to Jamie Watson's. In this analysis, I queer Charlotte and Lena's relationship to examine the underlying multiplicity that characterizes their interactions. To perform this analysis, I specifically utilize Kirsch's argument that the "activity of 'queer' is the queering of culture, ranging from the reinterpretation of characters in novels and cinema to the deconstruction of historical analyses" (33). The activity of reading Charlotte and Lena's relationship as queer deconstructs labels of "heterosexual" and "homosexual" to create something deeper and more personal. Furthermore, Lena Gupta's identification as a British woman of color explicitly calls to twenty-first-century Anglo-American discussions regarding inclusivity and directly combats the racism present in Conan Doyle's canon.

While Charlotte exhibits sexual interest towards Jamie and Lena dates Jamie's roommate Tom, both women display more intimate attachment with one another than they do with their heterosexual "partners." Jamie is not privy to Charlotte and Lena's relationship and cannot accurately categorize or define it, as he notes when he enters their dorm room:

I was more interested in Holmes's side, but it seemed that she had scrubbed all traces of herself from her room, saving her brilliant oddness for Sciences 442. Her desk was bare and clean, except for a digital clock, and the corkboard above boasted a single bright-blue Post-it that read *luv u girlye xo Lena* and had curled a bit with age. (That Holmes had left it up that long was surprisingly endearing.) On the shelf above her bed, her textbooks were in a neat line, and on the bed itself was a navy coverlet... (*Study* 83)

Jamie's comment that Charlotte's attachment to Lena's note is "surprisingly endearing" underscores that there is a side of Charlotte he does not know yet, despite his intimacy with both her past, the Lee Dobson case, and Sciences 442. As with Marcus's point that theorists and

historians cannot accurately define women's relationships in the Victorian Era, I would argue that the same applies to Charlotte and Lena. This exclusion is heightened later in *A Study in Charlotte* when Charlotte plans and carries out a fake poisoning attempt not with Jamie, but with *Lena*. While Charlotte concocted this plan to lift suspicion of Dobson's murder away from herself and Jamie, the fact that she trusted Lena with such a task, and that Lena carried off her role perfectly, complicates Jamie's presence because he is not always Charlotte's first choice of partner. Lena further serves as Charlotte's trusted companion (I would argue that "sidekick" is too simplistic and "partner" too equal) in *The Last of August* when she brings Charlotte a helicopter after Charlotte, Jamie, and August barely escape from Phillipa Moriarty (245). This level of trust between the two further underscores their intimate relationship.

While Jamie never displays jealousy of Lena (even saying, "she's actually a decent person" [*Study* 277]), he does observe that Charlotte and Lena are physically close and that such closeness is surprisingly easy. This closeness deconstructs Charlotte's supposed heterosexuality. When Lena, Charlotte, and Jamie spend time together one afternoon, Jamie comments that "It was odd to watch [Lena] next to Holmes...When the wind nipped at us, Lena huddled against her roommate with a familiarity that was almost shocking" (*Study* 180). Clearly Charlotte does not see Lena as a sexual threat and therefore feels comfortable with such intimate touching. When Lena and Tom leave Charlotte and Jamie at the end of *The Last of August*, "Lena lean[s] in to kiss her roommate on the cheek, leaving a smudge of red where her lips had been" (291). This kiss is Lena's most significant sign of affection towards Charlotte and while readers could interpret it as a platonic gesture of friendship, I would argue that such interpretation is imposing Western heterosexuality on two characters who do not necessarily *need* to be heterosexual. I interpret such actions on the part of both Charlotte and Lena as romantic, rather than sexual.

Lena and Charlotte clearly feel a deep and emotional connection to one another, and such an attachment takes on physical acts. And yet, their refusal to be labelled as heterosexual, bisexual or even pansexual emphasizes that such labels are not always necessary. Thus, this relationship stresses that queer theory “is about the deconstruction and the refusal of labels of personal sexual activity” (Whittle 117). Instead, this relationship calls to Eve Sedgwick’s argument that “[s]ome people, homo-, hetero-, and bisexual experience their sexuality as deeply embedded in a matrix of gender meanings and gender differentials. Others of each sexuality do not” (“Axiomatic 82). In other words, an individual’s sexuality is not experienced in a void; rather, sexuality is experienced in relation to one’s identity and other experiences. Lena and Charlotte’s relationship stands inside their matrixes as roommates, high school students, women (and specifically one woman of color), and their social statuses.

This deconstruction is further emphasized through Jamie’s increased attention to Charlotte and Lena together in *The Last of August*. He describes Lena as “the perfect roommate for Holmes” (*Study* 81), but his reason behind this statement is incorrect. He assumes Lena does not pay attention to Charlotte; however, readers learn that Lena is in fact intimately involved in Charlotte’s life. When Charlotte takes over as narrator in *The Last of August*, the reader receives a more personal understanding of Lena; for example, when her roommate arrives in a helicopter, Charlotte gives a more complete description of Lena than what Jamie can provide:

Things Lena Gupta was impressed by, in my experience with her: high-fashion jackets covered in snaps, spikes, and other metal hardware; unstudied eccentricity; things that exploded; boys who were willing to hold her bag. Things Lena had zero interest in: other people’s financial backgrounds. Lena was the kind of girl that let me draw her blood for an experiment without asking a single question. Lena never asked very many questions at all. This quality, among others, made her an excellent friend. (*August* 247).

Charlotte is “very happy to see her” (*August* 247) here. This emotive language, “very happy,” and description, “excellent friend,” also coincide with Marcus’s point that Victorian women

utilized a wide variety of language to signify a range of female relationships. Furthermore, their conversation in this moment, despite the fact that Jamie is wounded and unconscious, is easy and comfortable: Charlotte says they need to live together again next year, Lena comments that they should try to get a room in Carter Hall, and then Lena says she will stay with Charlotte as she coordinates her next move against the Moriarty family: “‘I’ll hang here,’” Lena said, ‘Don’t worry, I won’t talk.’ As usual, she understood me completely. When I looked over, she was playing Tetris on her phone” (*August* 249). These comments, directly from Charlotte’s first-person narrative voice, are instances of Charlotte utilizing her authorship to describe her relationship with her roommate.

Charlotte is also attentive to Lena’s needs. While hanging around the helicopter, Charlotte specifically talks about clothing for an upscale gallery event they will all be attending to ferret out more of the Moriarty clan because Charlotte knew that conversation would please Lena. Charlotte also lets Lena talk her roommate into a Secret Santa activity at Sherringford (*August* 251). While a small detail, this final point emphasizes Charlotte’s emotional intelligence towards Lena. Charlotte recognizes Lena’s needs, feels the need to fulfill such needs, and does not hesitate to do so. As such, Charlotte and Lena’s relationship can be read as queer to deconstruct historical analyses (Kirsch 33) and reinterpret female relationships as something more liminal than platonic or romantic: while Sherlock Holmes was famously asexual and Anglo-American culture still presumes heterosexuality for both literary characters and real-life individuals, literary critics cannot apply such historical constructs directly to Charlotte Holmes.

As a final note to this relationship, including a woman of color as Charlotte’s intimate friend and roommate directly contests (whether intentionally or not on Cavallaro’s part) the

racism so pervasive to the Sherlock Holmes canon.¹⁶⁶ At a minimum, Cavallaro marks the *Charlotte Holmes* series as one that pays attention to current popular and academic conversations regarding inclusivity. While not as radical as making Jamie Watson a British woman of color, Lena Gupta's presence as an intimate partner to Charlotte Holmes marks a combative stance against historical racism in the British Empire. Much like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's status as a person of color and his inclusion of Cyrus Douglas, these instances of re-crafting race to challenge Victorian prejudices highlight current social conversations in Anglo-American popular culture regarding race and ethnicity.

I would add one caveat or critique: reading Charlotte and Lena's relationship as queer requires active effort because Cavallaro does not explicitly identify Charlotte *as* queer or homosexual. This avoidance of outright homosexuality harkens back to my third chapter and its criticism of Sherlock Holmes adaptations that play with bromance rather than openly exploring a homosexual relationship. Cavallaro's apparent downplay of possible lesbianism feeds into Terry Castle's critique of Western literature, which she argues spectralizes the lesbian: "one might almost speak of a 'great tradition' of antilesbian writing – a dubious shadow canon of works in which women who desire other women repeatedly find themselves vaporized by metaphor and translated into (empty) fictional space" (45). In Castle's view, lesbians do not appear directly in Western literature but instead haunt its pages in the imagination and through insinuation. Such is the case between Charlotte and Lena. Their relationship remains, I would argue, unsatisfying for readers because Cavallaro signals its depth but does not fully explore the idea of a lesbian appropriation of Sherlock Holmes.

¹⁶⁶ Please refer to my first chapter and my analysis of Sherlock Holmes and John Watson's attention to race in the panopticon.

Conclusion

As this chapter has demonstrated, the Sherlock Holmes canon is no longer a stable, masculine, panoptic repertoire of texts; nor is it bound to ideas like fidelity criticism. Instead, I would argue that the canon displays and situates specific literary, cultural, and social mores against which adaptations and appropriations can situate their own literary, cultural, and social mores. In the case of Thomas and Cavallaro, their appropriations destabilize the gender hierarchies that defined nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture and literature and still influence twenty-first-century Anglo-American society.

These two authors re-gender the Sherlock Holmes canon to give priority to the “cultural noise” of the Victorian Era: the woman. While, as this chapter has discussed, women writers were not completely without voice, this voice always came with caveats concerning their gender. Such is not the case with Lady Charlotte Holmes & Charlotte Holmes. Both young women are complex characters who navigate and cultivate their feminist, progressive agency that embraces woman’s experiences, both the good and the bad. Thus, Thomas and Cavallaro epitomize literature’s ability to “provid[e] a space for thinking about how the world might have been different and might be different still...rather than chronicling the actual, it releases pure potential, even forgotten potential.” (Truth Goodman 4-5). The radical, feminist Charlotte Holmes characters call on readers to think about shifts in worldviews, from the idea of a feminist Neo-Victorian woman to a reevaluation of prejudices against rape victims. The re-gendering specifically works against Sherlock Holmes’s masculinity and the male protagonist’s primacy. Historically, “[a] reader is likely to experience the narrative events through the (male) hero rather than through the villain or woman and thus tends to identify with, even take on attitudes of this hero” (Favor 408). In crafting two Charlotte Holmes appropriations of Sherlock Holmes, Thomas

and Cavallaro combat both the canon's pattern of backgrounding female characters (Favor 401) and this tendency to identify with a male hero. Cavallaro and Thomas effectively neutralize masculinity's domineering presence in favor of a more equal state of affairs: Lady Charlotte's relationship with Lord Ingram does not contain the depth of sincerity and trust she has with Mrs. Watson; and Charlotte Holmes's relationship with Jamie Watson not only offers a more nuanced understanding of masculinity but tempers that male presence with another female companion, Lena Gupta. Moreover, the new interpersonal relationships between the appropriated Holmeses and their secondary characters asks readers to reevaluate the detective-sidekick dynamic, as well as the significance of forming deep emotional connections.

Therefore, these Charlottes are active agents of *choice*. I began this chapter with a quote from Anne Burns on a woman's ability to make choices. This agency appropriately defines these two Sherlock Holmes appropriations: Lady Charlotte *chooses* to utilize her virginity to further her professional interests; she *chooses* to forego social strictures and sets up a detective agency with a widowed stage actress. Similarly, Charlotte Holmes pushes against societal prejudices regarding a woman's *choice* in sex and consent and she defies clear categorization with her *choice* in friendship. In such contexts, the Sherlock Holmes canon is now part of an "infidel heteroglossia" (Finke 1) that deconstructs social and cultural understandings of sex and gender. As a continuation of and contribution to this heteroglossia, my conclusion carries on this privileging of woman and a woman's experiences.

The Adventure of the Elephant Figurine

June, 1889

10:00pm, Sunday – Sussex Gardens

A ring at the door started both myself and my husband John out of our peaceful Sunday evening.

“A patient!” I said to my husband as I laid down my needlework, “You’ll have to go out.”

Poor John. He groaned and tossed his newspaper. It had been a long day at the surgery. He enjoyed his surgical work but his commitment to it did not compare to his fervent enjoyment of detective adventures with Sherlock Holmes.

We heard a commotion in the hall as Nancy answered the ill-timed ring. Our parlor door burst open with a crash as Kate Whitney tumbled into our sitting room. Her beautiful blonde locks, normally perfectly coiffed atop her head, cascaded down her back. Her deep gray dress was wrinkled, her skirt hem thick with mud and jacket askew.

“I didn’t know what to do, so I came straight here!” Kate collapsed into my arms. John was always remarking that those who were grief-stricken came to me like birds to a light-house. Tonight, however, I sensed Kate was in need of his help.

I poured Kate some wine and water. “Tell us what troubles you.”

“It’s about Isa. He has not been home for two days and I’m afraid he’s fallen into another opium sleep.”

I looked over at my husband. John, always a man of passion, had both sadness and remorse in his face. I had known Kate at school and when she married Isa Whitney, I was

optimistic that he and my John would become fast companions. However, lately, Isa's opium habit had become too debilitating for the two men to enjoy one another's company. John had often remarked to me that he felt sympathy for Kate – a husband who could not control his urges and adequately provide for his wife was not a husband worth having, in his opinion.

John took Kate's hand and gave it a firm squeeze. "I will seek Isa out. I am his medical advisor and therefore I feel I have the right to interfere in his well-being. I assume the Bar of Gold is still his preferred haunt?"

Kate nodded her head in affirmation.

John rose from his chair and gave me a brief kiss on my cheek. "Don't wait up, Mary. As soon as I find him, Mrs. Whitney, I'll send Isa right home."

Kate gave my husband a tearful "thank you" as the door to the parlor closed behind him.

I rang for Nancy again and ordered her to bring us coffee and a few biscuits. Kate collapsed into John's abandoned chair.

Nancy came and efficiently laid out the desired refreshments. After she shut the door, I turned to Kate.

"Is there anything else troubling you, dear Kate?"

Kate gave a slight start. "What makes you say that?"

I took a seat. "Your husband's opium addiction is not new. Your concern is genuine and your frantic trip at this time of night to our home means you are alarmed by his latest orgy, which I assume has lasted longer than the usual four and twenty hours. However, I also observe a significant tremor in your fingers and you have lost at least five pounds over the past two weeks." Kate's face grew a shade whiter. "Those observations lead me to think there is

something else occupying your thoughts. Your aura tonight is also fraught with pain and frustration. Pray tell me what else is weighing on your conscience.”

“It’s my sister, Alice.”

I took a sip of coffee. Kate’s sister, Alice Smith, had recently suffered a horrifying loss. Her husband had been brutally murdered six months past while working late one night at his office. I noticed the mourning band wrapped around my friend’s upper arm. An ophthalmologist who had fallen victim to a surprise robbery in his office on Harley Street, Charles Smith’s death had made headlines. (Scotland Yard had claimed robbery as the motive, though I noticed none of the newspaper columns had identified missing items.) The unknown assailant had stabbed Charles three times in the abdomen. He bled out before the police could transport him to St. Barts. No witnesses ever came forward and no suspects were ever arrested.

Kate nodded. “I think he has...come back,” Kate said carefully, as if speaking those last two words too forcibly would conjure up the wandering spirit himself.

I silently thanked John for his eagerness to play the part of masculine hero and bring back Kate’s wayward husband. He had no knowledge of my side business as a...well, as a *spiritual* consulting detective. While John was more than happy to circumvent the law and ferret out criminal enterprises with Sherlock Holmes, they were ultimately men of science. Hard, factual science. Both men had neither time nor respect for the spirit world. Mr. Holmes’s preference for and appreciation of the unusual and fantastic did not extend to ghosts and séances. So, where were men, women, and sometimes children to turn when the greatest consulting detective turned them away, simply because their concerns were of the supernatural, rather than the natural?

Such tormented souls found an answer in me.

I took out a small diary that I kept handy in my knitting basket for just such visitors. John had often seen me making little notes in my diary, but the dear man, despite his obvious curiosity (“My dear, what are you writing now? Are you perhaps another mystery novelist, like Curren Bell?”), never disobeyed my request that he at no time look at the diary’s contents. I flipped past my old cases: Mrs. Wilson and her sudden ability to turn everything she touched the color red; Mrs. Anstruther’s brother and his wayward spirit (at the time John was out helping Mr. Holmes in a neat adventure John later titled “The Boscombe Valley Mystery”); and, of course, the illustrious Ms. Irene Adler (forever “the woman” to my husband and Mr. Holmes) and her Warsaw Opera ghost. John said when I had first entered 221B Baker Street to present my case regarding my father and the Agra treasure, he had considered my eyes “singularly spiritual and sympathetic.” I smiled a little, briefly delighting in how right he was without the slightest knowledge of my little hobby.

“Please start from the beginning,” I instructed Kate.

Kate took a deep breath. “You know the particulars as told in the papers. I have nothing to add there – the inquest was laughable, the detective work shoddy. Alice did not find out about her husband’s fate until the following morning, when a certain Inspector Lestrade paid her a visit.” (John had mentioned this inspector several times in connection with Holmes: an adequate detective only on his best days.) “Alice took the news badly and required sedation for almost a full week. She has not been sleeping, barely eating...the burial was a sobering affair, too. And then, about a month ago, Alice came to my house and said she had been hearing whispers in the night. Sinister whispers and nightmares, telling her she was responsible for Charles’s death.” Kate shuddered.

“What made you decide to come to me?”

“Two days ago, Alice woke up to find herself *barricaded in her room*. Her dresser had been moved in front of the door, and she could not get out. It took the servants two hours to take the hinges off the door and move the heavy dresser. But it was yesterday that made me think to seek you out: Alice was sitting in her bedroom last night with a fire,” Kate’s voice gained an octave in fear, “when the fire spurted out of control and went *directly for Alice*. Her dress caught fire and when she cried out for help, the door slammed shut and locked itself! Thankfully Janice had a spare key on her. She got to Alice just in time.”

I nodded thoughtfully as I jotted down these circumstances. Grim tidings indeed.

Kate’s trembling hands reached for her coffee. “I meant to call on you earlier today, but Isa’s absence left me constantly occupied with our personal matters.”

I nodded sympathetically. “How long had your sister and Charles Smith been married?”

“Three years.”

“A happy marriage?”

Kate stirred her tea. “I cannot say that I ever heard my sister complain about Charles. I do know he was not attentive, with a tendency to be abrupt, bordering on rude from my own observations.” Kate hesitated after her sentence, eyes lingering over her biscuit.

I examined my friend carefully. “Did he hurt your sister?”

Kate’s head slumped. “I could never be sure. Alice never came out and said so.” She looked up at me. “But I saw the bruises. Nothing ever obviously visible – a light scar along her wrist, a slightly dark patch on an arm or just under the neckline of her dress.”

Despite the recent improvements in women’s rights, we still had no firm recourse to pursue abusive husbands, fathers, brothers. I reflected often on how lucky I was to find security and compassion with John.

Nancy interrupted our discussion with a demure knock and a telegram from my husband:
Found Isa and sent him home in a cab. On a new case with Holmes – will be back when case is concluded. JW.

I nodded satisfactorily. If Mr. Holmes's case required travel, I could count on John's absence for at least two nights. That would be ample time for solving Alice Smith's mystery.

"Nancy, Mr. Watson will be absent for a few days on a case with Mr. Holmes. Will you see to it that the spare room is fitted up for Mrs. Whitney? It is too late for her to go back to her house tonight."

I turned to my friend. "Your husband is on his way home whereas mine is off on some grand adventure. Let me think on your sister's situation tonight and in the morning, we shall begin our own investigation. Good-night, dear Kate."

When I met Kate for breakfast the next morning, she was perusing the morning's paper and looking much calmer.

She greeted me as I sat down and asked, "What is our plan for today?"

I poured myself tea and liberally buttered my toast. "First, to the late Mr. Charles Smith's office in Harley Street, and then a visit to your sister. I must inspect the scenes myself before I start making assumptions concerning your brother-in-law's haunting. As an acquaintance once told me, you must suit theories to facts, not facts to theories."

"What a queer saying," Kate commented.

I smiled. "Quite a queer man said it."

My first impression of Mr. Charles Smith's medical practice was sparse, a term not frequently used in this neighborhood at this time. No knickknacks, no signs of consumerism. Just a few chairs in the waiting room, a clean and well-organized operating room, and office. After a quick glance at the first two rooms, I went into the office, where the murder had been committed. Bookshelves lined one wall with a mahogany desk at the room's center and a small cupboard equipped with tea things facing a large window that offered a close view of Harley Street and its prowlers. I closed my eyes and spread my palms out at my side to absorb the room's energy. The walls, furniture, and dust melted away as I stretched my senses.

There it was: the energy. Anger. Accusation. Fear. Coldness.

I opened my eyes with a flash. Accusation. It was possible Charles Smith had known his murderer.

"Have you been in your brother-in-law's practice before?" I asked my friend.

"Once or twice," Kate responded. "With Alice when they were first married and perhaps once last year."

"Do you recognize anything here? Does anything look out of place?"

Kate frowned and took a wider look at Charles Smith's office. "A clue?"

I nodded.

Kate looked around again. "What could I see that Scotland Yard would have missed?"

I shrugged. "Policemen are trained less in the art of detection than the art of interrogation. What they fail to see in a shoe print or missing photograph they often find with a fist or blow to the head in a suspect." *And what they lacked in in the art of detection, they ridiculed in the art of spiritualism.*

As Kate and I moved about Mr. Smith's private quarters, a glint in the window caught my eye. Upon further inspection, I found it to be a small elephant figurine: small enough to comfortably fit into my palm, gilded in gold with black eyes and with blunted rather than detailed features. Unlike the windowsill itself and the room's other objects, this figurine was not covered in a layer of dust. On a hunch, I held my hand over the object. Again, that aura of accusation.

"Do you recognize this figurine, Kate?" I asked.

"I..." Kate frowned. "I have a vague memory of an elephant figurine like that one. But I can't remember where..." Her brow furrowed in frustration.

"Here? Or perhaps at Alice and Charles's home?" I asked.

Kate shook her head.

"Earlier?"

"Yes!" Kate's eyes lit up. "Alice! I remember she had one stowed away in one of her drawers when we still lived with Papa."

"Have you seen it lately?" I asked.

"No," Kate took the figurine in her hands. "But perhaps she gave it to Charles? As I said, I have only been here twice."

I nodded thoughtfully and deposited the little elephant in my reticule.

"Do you think it's a clue?" asked Kate.

I shrugged. "It speaks to me. A man once encouraged me that a woman's impressions are often more valuable than the most logical reasoner." Despite his aversion to the spiritual world, Sherlock Holmes held a deep respect for a woman's natural power.

That noon, at Marylebone, a jumpy maid (Janice, I presumed) guided us into the morning room, where a woman identified to me as Mrs. Smith was waiting for us.

Kate earnestly embraced her sister. “How are you this morning?” Alice murmured a soft reply as Kate motioned me to approach.

“This is Mrs. Mary Watson,” Kate said to her sister, motioning me to come over. I took Alice Smith’s hand delicately into my own. She looked frail and frightened. “How do you do?”

Mrs. Smith motioned for us to sit over by the unlit fireplace. She rang for the maid and ordered tea.

“Mary is here to help, sister,” Kate explained, “I explained your concerns about Charles.”

Mrs. Smith’s hand quivered in mine. I noticed she no longer wore her wedding band.

“Mrs. Watson. So happy to finally meet you. Kate has been kind and generous in her praise of you and your talents,” said Alice Smith.

“I hope I can be of service,” I replied. “Would you give me leave to look over your house?”

I left Kate consoling her sister while I took a turn about the room. I catalogued the space in my “brain-attic,” to once more commandeer a term from the estimable Sherlock Holmes. Again, like the Harley Street office, I was struck by the room’s sparseness. (Clutter, rather than order, was the height of fashion.) I thought back to my own morning room, with its various books, boxes, and little trinkets John had picked up either during his wartime services or his detective adventures, not to mention the various little gifts we had received upon our wedding.

By contrast, this room spoke of difficult circumstances: the furniture was spare, the rug faded and dust-choked, the wallpaper fading fast, and the “clutter” merely consisted of Mrs. Smith’s few desk items and a sewing basket. I made another note in my pocketbook.

Kate gave a sudden cry and I turned around to see Alice collapsed in her chair.

Kate took her sister into her arms. Janice brought in some smelling salts and quickly revived her mistress. She and Kate conferred for a few minutes.

“She’s going to lie down for a bit while we examine the house,” Kate explained to me.

I nodded satisfactorily. “I am sure it is a comfort to have others here while she sleeps. Let us make the most of our time.”

I knew from my long years of intimacy with Kate Whitney that her father had fallen on hard times when she and Alice were young girls, and that they therefore did not bring much to their marriages. By society’s standards both women had married well and I expected to see such standards of living in their respective homes.

However, I encountered no such symbols of wealth in the Smith residence.

The sparseness from Mr. Smith’s office carried over into his personal residence. I also noted thick layers of dust on the staircase, the furniture in the dining room, and a general staleness that bespoke of not just frugality, but general economic decline. Aside from the maid who attended to Alice Smith, no other servant came across our inspection.

My search of the house was short, but not without many more little notes filling my pocketbook. “All we have left is the master bedroom.”

The bedroom was dark and the air heavy. A wash stand, armoire, and four-poster bed made up the furnishings. Alice Smith was sitting upright in the bed, supported by pillows with her Bible resting on her lap. She gave us a weak smile.

There was a little color in her cheeks and her eyes were steady. John would have said she needed bedrest and a regimen of laudanum. An alternative prescription would be to banish a dead spirit. I walked over to the bed and squeezed Alice’s hand in a gesture of good will. There

was no need for words. I noticed bruises along her collarbone. They were faint, almost like shadows except for the tell-tale circular patterns that indicated fingers. John had mentioned once that bruising typically only lasts for two weeks. Charles Smith's spirit was getting bold.

After Kate departed, I was left to my solitary musings. I pulled the elephant figurine out of my reticule and sat it on the little table beside me and picked up my sewing basket to start where I had left off last night with a baby blanket for an old school friend who was expecting her first child.

The *click clack click clack* of the needles resounded in the silent room and with each *click* and each *clack* I cleared my mind of distraction. Gone was John's absence on a case with Mr. Holmes, gone Isa Whitney and his opium addiction, and gone Alice Smith's dejected face. All that remained were the facts and now, with each *click* and each *clack*, I began to weave the threads of a narrative together from the little scribbles that cluttered the pages of my notebook. All the while, the elephant sat with me, its glittering eyes watching my needles twist and turn.

I was ready to make contact with Charles Smith's spirit.

As I prepared to embark on my spiritual journey, the brass clock perched on the mantle chimed ten o'clock. I stowed my knitting as Nancy placed my votive candles in a circle around the table.

I set the elephant figurine in the center of the table and placed my hands on either side of it. I could feel its tense, writhing aura increase as I narrowed my concentration. With my palms face up, I closed my eyes and created a receptive, welcoming aura of my own.

"Charles Smith," I said to the atmosphere, "come and visit with me."

I waited.

I knew Charles Smith had answered my call when the room went cold. My fireplace still roared, but I no longer felt its radiance.

“Welcome,” I said. “I have questions for you.”

I could sense the murdered man’s spirit shifting backwards and forwards in the flickering candlelight. It was restless.

“Why do you haunt your wife, Alice Smith?” I asked. The words hung in the room, suspended between my physical body and Charles Smith’s ghostly presence.

Anger hit me in waves. Roiling, seething anger. I frowned. “Do you blame your wife for your death?”

Anger. Stronger this time.

“Your wife was at home when you were murdered. Your housemaid and neighbors confirmed her alibi.”

The elephant figurine began to shake violently on the table. Interesting. I felt a tickle at the back of my neck. A hunch began to form.

“Charles,” I called out, “does this figurine belong to you?”

The spirit gave the figurine one more violent shake before letting it go. The elephant’s legs had left miniscule scrapes on the table’s surface.

“Did the murderer leave it behind?”

Charles’s spiritual presence shifted from roiling red anger to black loathing and the light from the fireplace dimmed. I was on the right track.

“Does your murderer have a personal connection to your wife? To Alice?”

The loathing oozed out and filled the room, like black tar. I nodded in satisfaction.

“Charles,” I called out. “I will uncover the identity of your murderer and ensure that he or she admits to the crime. However, that is the extent of my commitment to you. You abused your wife. You gambled away her money. You left behind a broken woman and a poverty-stricken home. She does not deserve the torture you are bringing upon her. Cease this madness. Immediately.”

A preternatural cackle echoed in my right ear. I frowned. Charles Smith was going to be a thorn in my side until I solved the case.

“Be gone!” I commanded, putting out one of the candles and breaking the spiritual connection.

I began restoring the room to its usual condition. Once done, I took the little elephant figurine up to my bedroom and placed it on my night table.

I fell asleep looking at its glittering eyes.

The elephant figurine bounced up and down in my reticule as I went about my errands the next morning. I did not return until 4.00. Nancy quickly came to greet me as she heard my determined footsteps echo in the hall. I went straight to my little desk and wrote out two notes for her.

The first I addressed directly to my friend:

Dearest Kate – Come immediately to my residence. Bring Alice.

The other I did not address:

Alice Smith stricken with deathly fever. Not expected to last the night. Come to 122

Sussex Gardens immediately.

I sealed and handed the papers to Nancy's waiting hands. "Go find Mr. Holmes's Baker Street Irregular by the name of Wiggins. Given this second note to him to deliver. You should find him loitering at The Crown. And please prepare for visitors with tea and perhaps some cold sandwiches."

Nancy took the messages and handed me a telegram that had arrived during my absence. It was John again, telling me not to expect him back for at least another day. *Good*, I thought to myself, *tonight's activities are not for men*.

Not twenty minutes later, Nancy ushered in Alice Smith and Kate Whitney, Alice looking rather anxious and Kate excited.

I bade them sit down. Nancy brought in the tea and foodstuffs.

After we had all been served, I began.

"Mrs. Smith, it seems you have quite the past."

Alice Smith's eyes grew round. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

I gave Alice a steady look. "I'm quite sure you do. Ten years ago, when you were not quite sixteen, you became involved with the Forty Elephants gang, an all-women gang operating in London. They recruited you right after your father lost a significant part of his fortune in a gambling den. The Forty Elephants leader, Emerald Emily, caught you trying to steal from a local pawn shop. She confronted you, but instead of turning you over to the pawn shop owner or local constabulary, she asked you to join their gang. You accepted her offer (or perhaps blackmail) and began amassing money to help your poor mother and your ten-year-old sister, Kate."

During my opening foray, Mrs. Smith remained still, and I watched for any signs of acknowledgement. She gave none. I was impressed. Everything I had said thus far was a verified

fact and yet the woman betrayed no emotion. Kate, on the other hand, could not hide her emotions half so well: her eyes and mouth grew wider in quite an un-ladylike fashion as she strove to absorb my words and look to her sister for answers.

“What you have said is correct.” Alice Smith’s matter-of-fact tone gave no indication that she had been unsettled by my news.

“Alice?” Kate’s eyes were vulnerable, her eyes full of questions.

Mrs. Smith looked sympathetically at her younger sister. “Yes, it is true. Every word. We were on the point of poverty, Kate. Father would have been tossed in prison, mother left without any means to support us. I did what I thought was necessary to keep us afloat and you, in particular, safe. At any rate,” here she took up a biscuit and nibbled at it, “thieving is safer than prostitution.”

I could not help but agree but did not say so. I was not yet done with my story. “You earned your freedom after many successful shoplifting adventures. Your father regained his wealth through a new investment in the East Indian Trading Company and you wanted to return to a more settled, less extralegal, life. You met Charles Smith, married, and moved up in society.”

Alice nodded her ascent to my statements. “May I ask how bringing up my past is relevant to my current state of affairs?”

I put down my tea and rang the bell. “Nancy, please bring in our last visitor. I believe she made her way over to the kitchen while you were attending to the wash. Please make sure she has not squirreled away anything of value, like my wedding china.”

Emerald Emily was still a magnificent woman to behold, even as her body showed signs of age and hard living. She was tall, I would hazard almost six feet, with a sinewy body and

luscious brown hair. Her eyes were hard like diamonds and the wrinkles creasing her face showed her to be nearer fifty than forty. She was regal not like the Queen or another monarch, but like a warrior princess.

Alice gave an involuntary gasp and rushed to Emerald Emily. “Emily!”

Emily clutched her old friend tightly. Her eyes swept across the room, suspicion clouding her face. “Alice...you are well? Has your fever broken?”

Kate looked at me in wonder. “Emily? *Emerald* Emily?”

“I’m afraid I engaged in some slight deception to lure you here,” I explained to the gang leader. “Please take a seat. We need to discuss Charles Smith.”

I silently thanked Alice for holding on tight to Emerald Emily’s arm. The former leader of the Forty Elephants gang had jumped at the name of Charles Smith but could not flee with her former protégé’s arm clenched tightly around her own. Emerald Emily deftly but lovingly shifted Alice’s grip down until they were holding hands. She then placed the young widow back in her chair before taking her own. I poured the illustrious gangster tea and offered her a tray of sandwiches.

“When you are ready, I would be most grateful if you would explain yourself and your actions six months prior to both Alice and her sister.”

Emerald Emily met my eyes. Defiance quickly turned to guilt. She turned to the widow. “I was only trying to protect you, Alice. I respected your choice to leave our sisterhood, but I could not leave off my interest in your welfare. So, I had my agents keep an eye on you. I was happy to see your father kept his new fortune, and that you were content with your life.

After you married Charles Smith, my happiness for you continued... for a time. But then my agents brought back reports that angered me: he was a gambler, he was pawning your

possessions in the street –” Here Emerald Emily stopped and pulled a satchel from a pocket in her men’s jacket and handed it to Alice.

Alice unwrapped the satchel and revealed a beautifully intricate brooch encrusted with small emeralds and rubies with gold filigree. Alice gasped. “My brooch!” She showed it to her sister. “Charles accused me of losing it last winter.”

“You are responsible for Mr. Smith’s death,” I said, steering the conversation back onto its original course. My statement hung heavily in the room as all three women processed their reactions.

Alice turned to her old friend. “Oh, Emily...”

The gangster calmly stirred her tea, adding in another lump of sugar. “Yes,” she said, glancing at Alice and then back to me, “he would not stop, Alice. He would have reduced both himself and you to poverty, sickness, prostitution...everything you fought against when you joined the Elephant Gang. I would *not* stand idly by and watch your husband reduce you to poverty just as your father did to his family when you were but a child. I sent out my spies for more information: he was pawning off only jewels and small items, yes, but it would not be long before he touched the dowry your father had settled on you but I knew he would become desperate. He owes money all around the houses and cannot control his urges. So, I took three of my gals and we went down to his office to talk some sense into him.”

I stirred my own tea. “I take it he was not amiable.”

Emerald Emily gave me a wry grin. “No. He threatened all manner of calamity on us: he would call Scotland Yard, he would turn out Alice and leave her to the streets, he would beat Alice until every bone in her body was smashed...” Alice winced. Emily continued, voice impassive and eyes meeting mine. “However, we are no strangers to violence ourselves.”

I nodded my head. "Charles Smith knew nothing of his wife's past life?"

"No," Alice said, interjecting. "I never told him."

"He underestimated me," Emerald Emily continued grimly. "He did not believe me when I said I would do everything in my power to protect a woman I consider my sister." She turned to Alice. "But I did not intend murder when I visited his office. I simply...lost control. I am deeply sorry...I wanted merely to ship him away on a barge or steamer to Australia or somewhere in the colonies. But when he started raving about what he would do to you..." Emily threw her hands up. "I had my knife. I used it. My girls got me out."

Alice had tears in her eyes. I saw pain, sympathy, forgiveness flash across her face.

"And the figurine?" I asked.

"I had intended to leave it as a token to remind Charles to respect his wife not knowing just how dangerous he would become to me. In our haste to leave, I forgot to collect it."

Emerald Emily asked, "What will you do now? I have admitted to the crime."

"Right now, the question is not one of legality or morality, but rather how to *stop* this restless spirit," I replied. "Charles Smith is a vengeful, hateful spirit. Nothing short of a banishing séance will keep him from wounding, and possibly killing, his wife." I looked around the room. "We all must participate, particularly Alice and...Ms. Emerald, as they are the primary offenders."

"What happens in a banishing séance?" asked Kate.

"We form a normal circle séance and summon Charles Smith's spirit. When it appears," I brought out the elephant figurine from my knitting basket and showed it to them, "we trap it in the Elephant Gang's calling card. And then smash it, thereby obliterating his spirit and casting him out of Alice's life."

Kate took the figurine from me and examined it. “Why this figurine?”

“It is a talisman that directly links you all to Charles Smith. We will make contact at midnight.”

The women gave their assent and we passed a quiet afternoon together, an odd juxtaposition to our reason for occupying my parlor. But quiet and content it was nevertheless: Alice seemed relieved to be out of her house of horrors and enjoyed Emerald Emily’s company. Kate demanded to be told of all their adventures. I listened with a passive interest as I prepared my body and spirit for the task awaiting us.

As the hour approached midnight, Nancy again helped me set up the séance circle in the morning room and offered herself as a fifth to our circle. Her fervent belief in spiritualism was well-hidden from my husband and she had played vital roles to my summonings in the past. I gave my assent.

“Take one another’s hands, palms up, and clear your minds from distraction,” I instructed my co-conspirators. “Open your mind only to receiving energy and Charles Smith’s spirit will come to us.”

Silence pervaded the room as I gathered up the spiritual energy.

“Charles Smith,” I called out, “I demand your presence.”

We did not have to wait long. Again came the angry presence. I felt Kate shift uncomfortably beside me.

Nancy’s hands remained steady and calm. I made a silent note to give her tomorrow afternoon off for her steady work tonight. As with my previous summoning of Charles’s spirit, his presence was again signaled by an icy chill and the feeling of black tar oozing into the room.

“Charles Smith,” I said again, “I have summoned you. It is time for your spirit to leave this realm.” I paused. “It is time for you to leave Alice alone.”

Anger settled into the room. I felt Alice’s hand stiffen in my own.

“Charles,” I called out again, “I have brought your murderer here. Emerald Emily admits to her crimes.”

Emerald Emily called out to Charles Smith’s spirit, her voice shaking ever so slightly, “I murdered you because I love your wife and I could not see her abused.”

Charles’s spirit shifted over to Emily and then to Alice, tar oozing into the spaces in between their bodies. Alice gave a small whimper.

Charles was defiant. I could sense his indignation, his accusation, his loathing.

“Charles,” I called out as Alice whimpered again, “You cannot keep up this relentless attack upon your wife.”

Alice whimpered again as her husband’s spirit shifted the air around her.

“I would like to speak.”

I raised an eyebrow to Emily’s comment. “Go ahead,” I told her. I applauded the thief’s bravery in the face of the spirit world.

“I seek your forgiveness, Charles,” she called out. “But I could not stand to see my friend...my *sister*...suffer at your hands.” Emily’s voice grew bolder. “Your actions were immoral. She had no way to defend herself. I am sorry to have taken a life, but I am not sorry to have saved a woman I consider to be family.”

Now, I thought to myself. Charles Smith’s spirit had let down its guard.

“Spirit!” I shouted, pulling my right hand from the circle and placing it on the elephant figuring, “COME TO ME!”

Charles Smith's spirit writhed in agony as it attempted to resist my hold over it.

A burning, hissing sound reverberated through the room and with a *whoosh*, I felt Charles Smith's spirit bend to our collective energy, as we forced it into the figurine.

I opened my eyes. The room began to warm again.

Nancy was the first to recover from the spell. She shook out her hands and snuffed out the votive candles. "I'll put these things away and turn on the lights. Does anyone require tea?"

We shook our heads no.

Kate peered at the figurine suspiciously. "He is...in there?"

I nodded. "I feel his presence trapped inside."

"But what now?" asked Alice.

With a sure stride and strong arm, I tossed the elephant into the fireplace. Alice let out an involuntary gasp as the figurine began to burn. "He will not bother you again. You may safely return home."

"And what of me?" The question came from Emily. "Will you turn me over to Scotland Yard?"

I had been considering this point since uncovering Emerald Emily's guilt. I briefly considered what Sherlock Holmes had said about me after my first visit to 221B Baker Street, when I was unmarried and in need of answers I could not garner from the spirit world: "I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met, and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way." Well, I yet retained that "genius way" despite my shift in marital status. I would take up Mr. Holmes's compliments and use my best judgment.

“Nothing,” I said, looking first to Alice, then to Kate, and finally to Nancy. We were all in agreement. “The greater justice has been served. Perhaps most significantly, justice has reached where the law cannot. Alice is safe and her husband’s spirit at peace.”

Emerald Emily shook my hand in thanks and gave Alice a kiss. “Be good, dear one.” And with that gesture, Emerald Emily quietly departed.

Kate took her sister by the hand. “Come home with me and we can talk about your life now.”

8:00pm, Wednesday – Sussex Gardens

I was sitting quietly with my knitting when John arrived later that evening.

“Mary!” He exclaimed, embracing me. “I’ve had the most fascinating time with Holmes these past few days. Do you want to hear of it?”

“Dear John, you know I do. Why don’t I ring Nancy for some tea?” John settled himself into his chair and began his narrative. Apparently, a certain Mr. St Clair had been masquerading as a beggar to provide for his family. Quite a scandal.

“Well, and what have you been doing in my absence? Did your light-house soothe Kate’s troubles?” he asked with a chuckle. He picked up a votive candle. Nancy had left the cabinet ajar and he held it in his hands, examining the wick’s burnt end.

I gave him a fond smile and took up my needlework. “I should believe so, John.”

Author's Note

I wrote “The Adventure of the Elephant Figurine” as my contribution to the post-2010 afterlives of the Sherlock Holmes canon. This story takes place as a separate, parallel investigation to Dr. John Watson and Sherlock Holmes’s missing person’s case in “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (published December 1891 in the *Strand*). “Twisted Lip” begins with Kate Whitney interrupting the Watsons at their home, but the story’s plot quickly shifts away from Isa Whitney’s drug problems once Watson discovers Holmes at the opium den and the detective requests that his friend join the quest to find Neville St Clair. Watson cables his wife to indicate that he will be gone for some days, and Mrs. Watson loses all importance to “Twisted Lip.” I take Mary’s storyline in a completely different direction. While Watson’s narrative assumes that his wife stays at home, in my story Mary Watson is a psychic detective whose casework consists of spiritual investigations and séances, realms Sherlock Holmes neither appreciates nor understands.

My story gives value to Mary Watson, whose significance to Sherlock Holmes (and even her husband) becomes negligible once her role in “The Sign of the Four” is at an end and she becomes Watson’s wife. As I discuss in my second chapter, when Holmes first meets Mary,¹⁶⁷ he praises her as not just a “charming young lad[y]” but also as a “decided genius” (Conan Doyle 140). Mary’s clear head and rationality aid Holmes and Watson on the case to discover the true cause of her father’s death. Conan Doyle’s depiction of Mary is not unlike that of Irene Adler or Violet Hunter, two other independent and intelligent “New Woman” characters in the Sherlock

¹⁶⁷ A brief refresher: Mary Morstan comes to 221B Baker Street for Sherlock Holmes’s help. Her father, an officer stationed in India, had disappeared ten years earlier. For the past six years, she has received a pearl once a year. What propelled her to visit Holmes was a letter that said she was a wronged woman. “The Sign of the Four” follows Holmes, Watson, and Mary on a case to link all three mysterious occurrences together.

Holmes canon. “Elephant Figurine” presents the reader with the Mary that Holmes so admired in “Sign” and expands her story to reach her fullest potential as a “decided genius.”

As such, I situate my story as a feminist production. “Elephant Figurine” follows in Sherry Thomas’s footsteps to create a feminist rather than postfeminist Neo-Victorian fiction. As Karen Sturgeon-Dodsworth’s comments, Neo-Victorian fictions often do not deliver on their intentions to re-create the Victorian New Woman. Unlike Guy Ritchie’s postfeminist Irene Adler, for example, Mary Watson and “Elephant Figurine” effectively “revea[l] hidden histories, illuminat[e] the problematic gender politics of the past and expos[e] the tyrannies of patriarchy” (Sturgeon-Dodsworth 164). This story focuses on a woman’s voice; challenges the gender prejudices of the “separate spheres” culture; and condemns patriarchy’s abuse of power. As previously mentioned in my fourth chapter, too, Neo-Victorian feminist interpretations of the Sherlock Holmes canon began with the works of Laurie King and Carole Nelson Douglas and continue with Sherry Thomas. I draw from these predecessors and their work while offering a new story. My story also relates to the BBC’s Mary Watson character, which I examined in my second chapter. This Mary Watson is the “antithesis of Victorian womanhood” through her physical characteristics (short hair) and her mysterious past (former CIA assassin) (Lane 239). In a similar vein, my Mary Watson is an assertive woman whose work as a detective defies social standards that pressured married women to remain in the home. However, unlike for the BBC’s Mary Watson, my adaptation has a happy ending: she does not need to sacrifice herself to find value in the Holmes-Watson homosocial relationship. Instead, Mary lives her own, separate life that is independent of the two men.

In a wider scope, “Elephant Figurine” is situated inside twenty-first-century emerging social and cultural changes. By centering on Mary Watson, I engage in the ongoing trend of bringing women and their stories to the forefront of historical, literary, and cultural narratives.

I further situate this piece as an adaptation that answers Linda Hutcheon’s argument that adaptations act as investigations into the original texts (7). Mary Watson in “Elephant Figurine” is both a quite literal investigator and a metaphorical one: her work is that of an investigator and her significance to the Sherlock Holmes canon is her story’s investigative work into the canon’s social, cultural, and political norms. Thus, my adaptation is “a derivation that is not derivative” (Hutcheon 9) because it offers a new, critical perspective not just into the Sherlock Holmes canon, but into Anglo-American gender constructs. Moreover, by creating a spiritual detective that relies both on abduction and séance, I investigate not just the revolutionary detective figure that Conan Doyle created, but also his later personal belief in the spiritual world, a belief Conan Doyle does not give Sherlock Holmes. As Catherine Wynn points out, “the apparent disjunction in [Conan] Doyle’s life as both the creator of *the* ratiocinative detective and a convert to spiritualism and fairy belief is a continuing source of fascination to both biographers and novelists” (6). Thus, “The Adventure of the Elephant Figurine” is just as much an adaptation of Sherlock Holmes as it is an homage to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle himself and his legacy with his consulting detective at 221B Baker Street.

“The Adventure of the Elephant Figurine” and, indeed, my entire dissertation, would not be possible without the pivotal *Klinger v. Conan Doyle Estate* case and its definitive order that Sherlock Holmes belongs to the public. While one cannot deny the need for copyright rules and legislation, I also think it is important to emphasize Peter Jaszi’s argument that copyright law “with its emphasis on rewarding and safeguarding ‘originality,’ has lost sight of the cultural

value of what might be called ‘serial collaborations’ – works resulting from successive elaborations of an idea or text by a series of creative workers, occurring perhaps over years or decades” (40). The re-working of the Sherlock Holmes canon by such creative workers as Sherry Thomas, Brittany Cavallaro, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and Mark Gatiss (just to name a few of the masterminds behind the works discussed in this dissertation) emphasizes Jaszi’s point that collaboration is in itself a creative process. This continual re-working of Sherlock Holmes’s afterlife means that the detective is never far from the public’s imagination. In his life, Sherlock Holmes was “a colossus” and in his afterlife “he continues to dominate cultural forms; long after his death, his creator continues to inspire biographies and is reshaped in fiction” (Wynne 7). Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle are inspirations for my text, but instead of inspiring textual fidelity, they inspire change and a new focus.

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ABSTRACT

“NOW WATSON, THE FAIR SEX IS YOUR DEPARTMENT”: GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN POST-2010 SHERLOCK HOLMES ADAPTATIONS

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My dissertation takes a selection of post-2010 Sherlock Holmes adaptations and appropriations and examines how they challenge, deconstruct, and transform gender and sexuality. I construct this investigation on the argument that, as works of popular culture, the Sherlock Holmes stories reflect and engage with popular understandings of gender and sexuality; the adaptations and appropriations, also works of popular culture, underscore recent, radical shifts and changes in twenty-first-century gender and sexuality. To explore these shifts, I employ a variety of methodologies. I begin with Annette Kolodny's "playful pluralism" to better contextualize gender in the Victorian Era and the characters and character dynamics of the Sherlock Holmes canon. I further emphasize the nuances in the canon and how its inclusion of "New Woman" characters reveal Conan Doyle's more progressive views of women's rights. After establishing these key contexts, I turn to my chosen adaptations and appropriations. I first focus on post-2010 secondary characters whose complex storylines emphasize negotiation rather than textual fidelity. I argue that these characters approach gender as a performed role defined through social norms; while a character's ability to denaturalize the gender apparatus varies, all characters embody challenges to the binary structures of "male" and "female." Next, I scrutinize adaptations that maintain the male-male relationship between Holmes and Watson; in short, the

Victorian homosocial bond shifts to more emotive, affective bromance-like relationships. My fourth concentrates on two female authors who transform Sherlock Holmes into *Charlotte* Holmes. Sherry Thomas and Brittany Cavallaro appropriate Sherlock Holmes for the purpose of promoting and exploring feminism and women-centered stories. To frame this chapter analysis, I utilize feminism, gender studies, and adaptation studies. My conclusion is an appropriation of my own. This story takes place as a parallel to “The Man with the Twisted Lip” (December 1891). Rather than follow Sherlock Holmes and John Watson on a case, “The Adventure of the Elephant Figurine” follows Mary Watson, psychic detective, on a case regarding the vindictive spirit of a dead husband. I wrote “Elephant Figurine” as a contribution to the feminist appropriations of the Sherlock Holmes canon.