The Development of a Young Detective

The Adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes into a Modern-Day Consulting Detective in the BBC's *Sherlock*

Yvette Meertens
MA Thesis
English Literature & Culture
Leiden University
Supervisor: Dr E.J. van Leeuwen
Second Reader: Dr M.S. Newton
21 June 2020

Table of Contents

Introduction

> ‘You don’t know Sherlock Holmes yet,’ he said; ‘perhaps you would not care for him as a constant companion.’
> ‘Why, what is there against him?’
> ‘Oh, I didn’t say there was anything against him. He is a little queer in his ideas, and enthusiast in some branches of science. As far as I know he is a decent fellow enough’ (14-5)

When young Stamford first told Dr John Watson about Sherlock Holmes, in Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Study in Scarlet* (1887), he introduced one of the most famous detectives of all time. At the beginning of his narrative, neither John Watson nor Doyle would have seen this fame coming. It took a chance meeting with an old colleague for the retired army doctor to make the acquaintance of Mr Sherlock Holmes, the world’s only consulting detective. It also took Arthur Conan Doyle one convenient lunch with American J.M Stoddard to make sure that *The Study in Scarlet*, and with it his detective, would not disappear without a trace. It was Stoddard who saw the potential in Sherlock Holmes and who would commission the second novel length story: *The Sign of The Four* (1890) (Hill 22). However, it was only when George Newnes and Doyle joined forces, and the first Sherlock Holmes short stories were published in *The Strand*, that the consulting detective found his audience (Pavett 17; Hill 31). The Baker Street detective has remained iconic ever since, finding a new audience among every generation.

The interest in Sherlock Holmes still has not withered. Most people are in some way familiar with the character and have at least a basic knowledge of his characteristics and what he stands for. Most importantly, each generation, according to Stephen Joyce, “shapes its own idea of the great detective” (80). One of the most popular current incarnations of Sherlock Holmes that the younger generation considers their own is the BBC’s *Sherlock*. The show first aired in 2010 starring Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman as Dr John Watson. At the time of writing this study, the series consists of four seasons, each

containing three ninety-minute episodes, a Christmas special of the same length, and one short special that was posted online before the season three premiere.

What makes Cumberbatch's incarnation of Sherlock Holmes different from all its predecessors is that he is the first incarnation of the consulting detective that does not walk around in Victorian London. Instead, he is a blackberry wielding, Belstaff coat and blue scarf wearing man in modern-day London. The creators of the show, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, are themselves long-time Sherlock Holmes fans who created this modern version of Holmes because they wanted to add something to the Sherlock Holmes canon. Especially in the first two seasons, the cases that are covered by the two screenwriters appear to be modernized adaptations of Doyle's original work. Moffat and Gatiss put their own spin on, but never lose sight of, the source material. However, the two men are of the opinion that previous adaptations lacked a focus on the friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson (Joyce 87). Though the importance of their friendship is hinted at throughout seasons one and two, it does not outshine the detective-genre aspects of the episodes. This happy medium of equal attention to personal friendship and detective cases starts to shift after Sherlock leaps off the rooftop of St. Bartholomew's Hospital at the end of season two.

With the return of Sherlock Holmes in season three, a remarkable shift in focus is noticeable in the series. Though the cases, as well as the inspiration from Doyle's stories, are still palpable, they are reimagined in a way that they become personal to Holmes himself and eventually fade more into the background. In turn, the personality of Sherlock Holmes takes centre stage and the detective's personality and the relationships he has with those close to him become the primary dramatic focus of the series. What Moffat and Gatiss regarded as lacking in previous adaptations becomes foregrounded as the series shifts its attention to the character of Sherlock Holmes and his relationships to the other characters.

This thesis will analyse how the character and stories written by Arthur Conan Doyle have been adapted in season three and four of the BBC's *Sherlock* and how the character of the detective develops throughout these two seasons. While the series has been explored by academics over the past decade, most studies mainly focus on the first two seasons. More specifically, the character development of Sherlock Holmes, which is foregrounded in season three and four has not been subject to a study of its own. I will perform an analysis through the lenses of both Adaptation Theory (Hutcheon, Joyce, Kline) and Character Studies (Eder, Jannadis & Schneider, Redmond), in order to achieve a complete picture as to how the character of Sherlock Holmes was adapted from Doyle's stories and further developed for the television series. A couple of key concepts from both Adaptation Theory as well as Character Studies are significant to introduce before starting the detailed analysis of Sherlock Holmes's character. These concepts will be discussed below and will serve as the critical foundation of this study.

The key concept for this study in relation to Character Studies is characterisation, which "includes all information associated with a character in a text" (Eder, Jannadis & Scheider 31). This information gives the character properties or traits "concerning body, mind, behaviour, or relations to the (social) environment" (Eder, Jannadis & Schneider 32). All these properties, or traits, are collectively called the character structure "- corporeality, psyche, and sociality – the features that characters are ascribed can be either stable (static) or changeable (dynamic)" (Eder, Jannadis and Schneider 13). Eder, Jannadis & Schneider further elaborate on the importance of character constellations, a "network of relationships ... however, more than the mere sum of all characters. Its structure is determined by all relationships between the characters" (26). The final significant term for this study is empathic appraisal, which entails the approximations of the "feelings of the characters ... connected to the characters' situations." (Eder, Jannadis & Schneider 54).

Since *BBC Sherlock* is an adaptation, the concept of adaptation is crucial to this study. According to Linda Hutcheon, it is possible to adapt a work in a number of different ways (7). Therefore, it is essential to note that "adaptations are never simply reproductions" (Hutcheon 4), since they have always been interpreted by the creator. This concept of (re-)interpretation is better known as appropriation or salvaging (Hutcheon 8). Yet, however autonomous an adaptation may seem, it can at all times be palimpsestuous, which means that it is "haunted at all times by their adapted texts" (Hutcheon 6). These key terms of Adaptation Theory will aid in the exploration of how Moffat and Gatiss interpreted the dictionary meaning of "to adapt" in their series.

I have decided to narrow down my analysis to the third and fourth season of the BBC's *Sherlock*, excluding the Christmas special. These two seasons are the most important in terms of Sherlock Holmes's character development. Since all the episodes of the series clearly reference the Sherlock Holmes stories on which they are based, I have decided to focus my analysis of the stories on these specific works. I will also include two stories that are narrated by the detective himself, as they might give a better insight into Doyle's version of Holmes's character. For the sake of clarity, I will also differentiate in my references to either version of Sherlock Holmes. Since their names are the same, and I will refer to both the characters and their characteristics in quick succession, I will from this point onward refer to the Sherlock Holmes of Arthur Conan Doyle's stories as Holmes and to the BBC's version of Sherlock Holmes as Sherlock.

As for the structure of this study, I will first critically explore the stories and the character of Holmes in Arthur Conan Doyle's stories and how the detective handles the situations in which he finds himself as well as how he interacts with other characters. The second chapter will study the development of the character of Sherlock throughout both seasons, with an emphasis on season three, as well as explore the cases Sherlock gets involved

in, since they are starting to bleed into his personal life. The third chapter will focus on season four of *BBC Sherlock*, in which the character of Sherlock and his relationships completely overshadow the cases, shifting the series towards the genre of melodrama. Throughout the analysis of the two seasons I will draw comparisons to the content of Doyle's stories to explore how the creators of the television series adapted the Victorian Holmes to a twenty-first century Sherlock.

1.
Holmes's Personality
Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes

> 'My mind,' he said, 'rebels at stagnation. Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants. But I abhor the dull routine of existence.' (98)

The manner in which Holmes explains himself to Watson in *The Sign of the Four* summarizes his character in broad terms. He is an intellectual man who loathes a plain existence, avoiding it by injecting himself with either "morphine or cocaine" (Doyle 97). This chapter will analyse the literary character of Holmes in more detail, through a close reading of selected stories from the canon by Arthur Conan Doyle,[1] as well as previous studies into Holmes's character (Redmond, Hill, Small). Firstly, I will briefly analyse Sherlock Holmes's character origins. From there, I will discuss the characterisation of Holmes by focussing on three aspects of the detective's life: his innate personality, his relationship with other characters and the manner in which he handles cases. These various aspects of the character of Holmes will reveal his character structure, which will show that the character of Holmes is, above all, multi-faceted and complexly built.

Holmes's Origins

Stephen Butler and Agnieszka Sienkiewicz-Charlish argue that characters in crime writing are almost as important as the actions in the novel (10). This statement makes the exploration of Holmes's origins crucial to his character study. Holmes's character was inspired

[1] The selected stories for this study are: *The Sign of the Four* (1890), "The Adventure of the Gloria Scott" (1893), "The Adventure of the Musgrave Ritual" (1893), "The Adventure of the Empty House" (1903), "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton" (1904), "The Adventure of the Six Napoleons" (1904), "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" (1913), "His Last Bow: An Epilogue of Sherlock Holmes" (1917), "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier" (1926), "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" (1926).

by Joseph Bell, an old teacher of Arthur Conan Doyle. In his book *Memories and Adventures,* he recalls that his teacher had an "eerie trick of spotting details" (74). Doyle was intrigued by this ability, thinking that "if he [Bell] were a detective he would surely reduce this fascinating but unorganized business to something nearer to an exact science" (75). According to Doyle, many readers of the stories also regarded Holmes as a real person of flesh and blood due to his "frequent appearance upon the stage" (101). This corroborates a statement by Eder, Jannadis and Schneider, who claim that the success of fictional characters is partly due to the concept that fictional characters can remind readers of real people (3). Though it is unknown whether Doyle's contemporaries were aware of the real-life inspiration for the detective, the person of Joseph Bell might shine through in Doyle's description of Holmes. Moreover, the detective's frequent appearance on the stage by a physical actor made him visible to the readers of the stories. The real-life inspiration and physical visibility caused the readers to regard the fictional Holmes as a real human being.

However, Eder, Jannadis & Schneider also point out that characters are not so straightforward as their previous statement suggests. Though they may be reminiscent of a real person, "they do not appear to exist in reality" (3) and "emerge from the readers' imagination" (47) with many of the responses to the character being prefigured by the text (50). Therefore, aside from keeping Arthur Conan Doyle's real-life inspiration for the detective in mind, it is important to also examine the character of Holmes as it was described by Arthur Conan Doyle and later interpreted by the readers, outside of this real-life inspiration.

Holmes's Innate Personality Traits

This section will focus on the innate personality traits of Holmes through a close reading of the stories combined with previous research and interpretations of the character, thus revealing the key traits that shape the character of Holmes.

The first feature of interest in the case of Holmes's character is also the one that most modern readers might have difficulty with: his use of stimulating substances. As the quote at the beginning of this chapter showed, Holmes uses drugs in order to escape the drudgery of everyday life, much to the abhorrence of Watson. Whereas most people in Victorian England were aware of the consequences of substance abuse and would likely share Watson's opinion that Holmes should not "risk the loss of those great powers" (97), the fact that Holmes is a drug user was not as frowned upon as it may be today. Christopher Redmond points out that "use of such drugs [as cocaine or morphine] was legal in the England of the 1890s" (34). Moreover, people in Victorian England may have been shocked by places like opium dens, they did not entirely abandon their "habits" as the upper classes called their own substance use (Castelow). Due to its legality and widespread use, drug use would have been better understood, or at least more condoned, in Doyle's time. Redmond also argues that Doyle's choice of making Holmes a drug user serves a purpose in showing more of his personality, since the substance use can be seen as an emphasis on Holmes's mercurial[2] personality and his pose of sophisticated eccentricity (34), both of which are character traits that are clearly visible in Holmes throughout the stories. All in all, Holmes's drug use, though more shocking and seemingly illegal to a modern audience, still has much significance for the detective's characterisation in terms of what it indicates about his eccentricity and mercurial, or unpredictable, personality. Holmes's eccentricity and unpredictability are two key characteristics that will be explored, beginning with Holmes's eccentricity.

Undeniably, Holmes has several mannerisms that may be considered odd, eccentric or uncommon. What is interesting about the character of Holmes is that, though he is aware of the fact that not everyone understands his manner of thinking, he considers it to be an easily

[2] Of a person: having a lively, volatile, or restless nature; liable to sudden and unpredictable changes of mind or mood; quick-witted, imaginative (OED).

achievable skill. He attempts to teach Watson this skill at the beginning of *Sign* by going through his deduction process step by step. When he learns one of his clients' profession and nationality through mere observation in "Blanched Soldier," he points out to his astounded client that he sees no more than him, but that he has trained himself to notice what he sees (1255). Moreover, in "Lion's Mane," when Holmes is praised for solving the problem, he merely points out that he is "an omnivorous reader with a strangely retentive memory for trifles" (1373). In the stories narrated by the detective himself, of which "Lion's Mane" is one, Holmes says that he has a "vast store of out-of-the-way knowledge without scientific system … like a crowded box-room with packets of all sorts stowed away" (1368). Because he cannot remember every piece of reading he has ever consumed, he also plunges into his book collection in order to find the information he was looking for, but of which he only had a "dim remembrance" (1368). What makes Holmes's deductive skills a part of his eccentric nature is the degree of usage. Throughout the stories, Holmes's deductive and analytic powers are always present. The detective appears to be in a constant state of deducing the world and people around him, making him seem more like a machine than a human being.

The second aspect of Holmes's eccentricity is his acute senses. Aside from his keen eye for observing details, it is also pointed out in various stories that sight is not Holmes's only acute sense. In "Blanched Soldier," the other story narrated by the detective himself, Holmes points out how it is likely that his "friend Watson may have remarked, [he has] an abnormally acute set of senses" (1263). This is exemplified in Holmes smelling the disinfectants on a pair of leather gloves without being close to them at all. One instance in which Watson is the one to see Holmes at work in an eccentric manner is in *Sign,* where Watson describes Holmes examining a room on his knees, "with his long, thin nose only a few inches from the planks, and his beady eyes gleaming and deep-set like those of a bird" (123). Though in both instances

Holmes's behaviour is ordinary to the detective, this behaviour could be considered odd when observed by an outsider.

The appearance of eccentricity through Holmes's manner of examining a scene leads into the final aspect of eccentricity that is of importance in an analysis of Holmes's character. One recurring factor in many of the stories is Holmes's penchant for disguises, usually as a member of the working class, in order to follow a lead on his case. He is also rather good at maintaining his disguises, as is shown in one particular scene of *Sign*, where Watson and Mr Athelney Jones are seated in Baker Street waiting for Holmes when an old sailor enters asking for the detective. The two men tell the sailor to take a seat and wait, returning to their cigars, when Holmes's voice interrupts them. When Watson and Jones question him about where the old men went, Holmes holds "out a head of white hair. 'Here he is – wig- whiskers, eyebrows and all'" (147). If two people who know him well cannot recognize Holmes underneath his disguises, it is difficult to imagine anyone who can. All in all, it may be said that even though Holmes is a clever and intelligent man, his mannerisms and ways of investigating can be considered eccentric, even though the detective himself thinks he is merely a fervent reader and actor with a good memory and acute senses who solves cases for his own convenience.

In the stories, Holmes solves cases to satisfy his curiosity rather than because of an urge to solve crimes. This is where his aforementioned mercurial personality takes centre stage. As with many aspects of the detective's character, *Sign* is the most useful when looking at Holmes's unpredictable personality due to its novel length, since this length leaves more room to explore the day-to-day activities of Holmes and Watson outside of their cases. Moreover, the unpredictability is best observed through the narrations by Watson, since Holmes would not consider his own behaviour unpredictable. Holmes's mercurial personality, as seen through the eyes of Watson, takes shape in three different dualities: methodical vs. chaotic, morosely

depressed vs. enthusiastically happy and, lastly, calculating machine vs. emotional human being.

The duality of methodical vs. chaotic is not as much a characteristic of Holmes's personality, but rather a projection of Holmes's mind onto his environment, more specifically his flat in Baker Street. As Holmes mentioned in "Lion's Mane" his head consisted of a "crowded box-room with packets of all sorts" (1368). This idea of a crowded room is also visible in Watson's description of Holmes as well as the Baker Street flat in "Musgrave Ritual": "he was the neatest and most methodical of mankind … he was none the less in his personal habits one of the most untidy men that ever drove a fellow-lodger to distraction" (724). By looking at both of these descriptions side by side, it is possible to conclude that the chaos that Watson sees in the flat is only chaos in his perception. For Holmes, it is similar to the manner in which his mind works, and therefore appears less chaotic to him.

The second duality of morose depression vs. enthusiastic joy, by contrast, is more prominent throughout the stories, especially in *Sign*. Early in the story, Watson finds Holmes "dejected and somewhat morose" (143) at one point and enthusiastically talking in "quick succession of subjects … handling each as though he had made a special study of it" (148) during their evening meal a few days later. Watson remarks on this situation himself: "his bright humour marked the reaction from his black depression of the preceding days" (148). Redmond points out various different scholars' opinions on this particular duality, ranging from manic-depression by, in the article, unnamed scholars to a secret identity as a woman by Alan Bradley and William Serjeant (34). I would rather argue that Holmes's mood is dependable on the state of the case which he is solving.

The beginning of *Sign* sees a bored Holmes who is injecting himself with "a seven-per-cent solution" (97) in order to alleviate his boredom. He has no case to solve and, therefore, is subject to the abhorrent regular life. When Watson remarks that his companion is somewhat

morose and unresponsive of his questions, the apparently simple case has evolved into the murder of Mr Bartholomew Sholto. Holmes is still busy working out all the clues he has found, but at that point has no idea how to proceed in the case. From the moment he disappears the next morning, disguised as a rude sailor, he knows how he will be able to solve this latest problem and becomes excited. The results from his disguised investigation aid Holmes a great deal, which causes him to be more enthusiastic as he comes closer to resolving the problem. This makes him happy, which Watson notices during their evening meal. Therefore, I conclude that this duality in Holmes's personality of alternating depression and enthusiasm is based on the detective's level of boredom as well as his proceedings in solving a case.

The third and final duality that governs the mercurial aspect of Holmes's personality is the one of the calculating machine vs. emotional human being. Since the concept of the changeable personality originated earlier in this chapter through its link to Holmes's substance use, it is only fitting that the reasoning behind the detective's machine-like behaviour might be related to his drug use. Douglas Small states that Holmes's behaviour is closely related to the morphine and cocaine he injects himself with. He argues that cocaine and other chemicals are known to fulfil one particular purpose, similar to Holmes's automaton-like behaviour: it is "optimized to perform a specific function" (354). In other words, Holmes's only function is to solve cases and then disappear again from his clients' life. However, this interpretation reads more like a description of an object that can only think, whereas a character, and therefore Holmes, has a mental state. As Hill points out, "Watson calls him 'an automaton – a calculating machine', but of course he is much more than that" (26). In fact, the stories more than once point towards Holmes's tendencies towards drama as well as hints at a more emotional side to the detective. The former is most famously Holmes's apparent death in "The Final Problem," a death that turned out to be feigned when the detective returned in "The Empty House." However, smaller tendencies towards acting and drama are also found in "The Dying

Detective" where Holmes pretends to be dying in order to "surprise a confession" (1181) from his supposed murderer. The hint towards Holmes also being susceptible to more tender emotions is noted by Watson in "Six Napoleons" where he notices his companion betraying "his human love for admiration and applause" (992), as well as being "more nearly moved by the softer human emotion that I [Watson] had ever seen him" (993). What these small, though important fragments show is that Holmes cannot merely be characterised as an automaton with one optimal function, as Small argues. Instead the detective is a calculating, concentrated and clever man who, though he solely wants to solve problems, cannot help but show his love for admiration from time to time.

Holmes & Other Characters

This section's analysis of Holmes's character will explore the detective's relation to others in the larger character constellation of the stories. I will explore Holmes's relation to various other characters in the stories. There will be a particular focus on the detective's companion and biographer Dr John Watson and Holmes's relation to women.

As narrator and foil to Holmes, Watson is the most important character in the constellation. Overtime the two have become inseparably united. Not only do they solve the cases together; they are also inseparable as characters. In this study, I will not discuss Watson's character in detail, as he deserves a stage of his own. What I will explore is Holmes's relationship to Watson and the manner in which the two interact with one another. Watson is the focaliser in most of the stories and the doctor is in many ways the opposite of the intellectual, yet socially somewhat distant detective. As Holmes asserts in "Blanched Soldier" he does not "burden [him]self with a companion ... out of sentiment or caprice, but it is that Watson has some remarkable characteristics of his own" (1254). Watson may not share Holmes's intellect; the detective does appreciate his companion.

Even though Holmes does not share his emotional state often with others, his affection towards Watson does come to the surface from time to time. One of these moments is when he first meets Watson again after his feigned death in "Empty House":

> 'My dear Watson,' said the well-remembered voice, 'I owe you a thousand apologies. I had no idea that you would be so affected.' ... 'Several times during the last three years I have taken up my pen to write to you.' ... 'I found myself in my old armchair in my own old room, and only wishing that I could have seen my old friend Watson in the other chair.' (852-6)

These words, though spread across an entire dialogue with Watson, clearly show that Holmes felt bad for abandoning his companion in the manner that he did, indicating that he thinks highly of his friendship with Watson.

Contemporary readers have questioned whether the reference to Watson as the quoted above "My dear Watson" by Holmes has anything to do with a more intimate, possibly homosexual relationship between the two companions (Redmond 33). Redmond and Ramday both firmly state that this is not at all the case. Holmes and Watson have a homosocial[3] relationship, a close relationship that can be compared to a boys' club with members who have similar (masculine) interests. Holmes and Watson are the only two members of their boys' club and they like to solve crimes together. As Ramday argues, both Holmes and Watson are flawed and damaged characters, respectively. They only fulfil their potential as intrepid Victorian heroes when they come together and begin their symbiotic friendship where they balance each other's deficiencies (68). In calling Watson "my dear Watson" or "my dear doctor," as

[3] Designating social interaction between members of the same sex(OED).

Redmond states, Holmes obeys "the conventions of his times and place, but no doubt the stress was all on the "dear"" (34). Holmes and Watson are as iconic as they are inseparable, which is likely due to their mutual respect and appreciation.

When discussing Holmes's relations with other people, it is important to point out that the detective generally behaves like a proper gentleman. According to James Eli Adams, this difficult to define term can be seen as a moral ideal "embodied as a charismatic self-mastery akin to that of the daring yet disciplined entrepreneur" (7), but which also "enforces the habit of emotional reserve" (207). Robin Gilmour adds to this that the notion of the gentleman as Victorians understood it was "a cultural goal, a mirror of desirable moral and social values" (1). For as far as the presently analysed stories are concerned, it is of no importance to Holmes who his potential clients are, though the detective's regular clientele consists of upper- and middle-class clients. Nevertheless, Holmes can still appreciate aid from the lower classes, which is shown through the "Baker Street irregulars," a group of "a dozen dirty and ragged little street arabs" (139). Holmes uses these lower class, presumably, children in order to gather information or serve as extra pairs of eyes in the more unsavoury parts of London in exchange for payment.

The most important aspect of Holmes' behaviour towards his clients is that, aside from being polite, he remains business-like to them at all times. From the moment that, for example, Mr James M. Dodd enters the flat in "Blanched Soldier" Holmes immediately directs Mr Dodd's attention towards the case and getting to know his client's past and employment through observation (1255). This distant behaviour is nothing less than Holmes' machine-like personality taking the upper hand in that moment, which it usually does when he is starting to work on a new case. However, Holmes's machine-like tendencies do not traverse into the impolite end of the spectrum, as the detective never forgets to be polite and considerate of his clients. In "Blanched Soldier," Holmes joins Mr Dodd on a visit to the house of his presumably

missing friend with the case nearly finished. Already aware of the delicate situation of the friend's family, Holmes does not barge into the room declaring his solution. Instead, he hands the father of the young man a note with a single word written upon it, which subsequently forces the hand of the father to divulge the entire situation to Mr Dodd. The detective declares by the end of the story that "if I wrote rather than said it, it was to prove to you that my discretion was to be trusted" (1269). Even though Holmes may at times appear merely a machine, he is aware of the personal weight of certain cases on the victims, and therefore would never betray their trust through indiscretion or impoliteness.

Another interesting point of analysis is Holmes's relationship with women. Doyle said that he received a question from the playwright of one Sherlock Holmes play, asking the original author if he could marry Holmes (102). Though this idea of Holmes and a woman as a couple is something that people wanted to see happen, such a union is not present in the stories, since those are all about Holmes's homosocial boys' club of solving crimes. In Holmes's eyes, women are clients like all his other clients and nothing more. When Watson tells his fellow-lodger that he intends to marry Mary Morstan at the end of *Sign*, Holmes tells his companion that he "really cannot congratulate [him]" (174). An astounded doctor immediately questions his friend as to why, with the response being that though "she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met ... love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things" (174). This is one of the instances that shows the particular point I wish to make about Holmes's relation to women, which I will draw upon the basis of the following quote from "Blanched Soldier":

> Women have seldom been an attraction to me, for my brain has always governed my heart, but I could not look upon her perfect, clear-cut face, with all the soft freshness of

> the Downlands in her delicate colouring, without realising that no young man would cross her path unscathed. (1365)

Both quotes show that Holmes considers his reason and intellect to be of more importance to him than emotion and love. This again indicates that Holmes's character is mostly governed by reason and does not often, if at all, show his emotional side. He does, however, see the potential impact that a woman's appearance might have on other men surrounding him. Though he may never fall in love himself, and maybe even distrust women at times as Harold Orel notes (170), that will not prevent the detective from behaving courteously and polite towards them, as he does to all his clients and sometimes even the perpetrators of the crimes he solves. In the next section about Holmes and his cases I will analyse in more detail why the detective would remain a polite gentleman even towards those that the readers might regard as evil.

Holmes & His Cases

The final aspect of Holmes's character that needs to be discussed is the detective's relationship to his cases. Though this does not initially appear to qualify as a definite aspect of Holmes's personality, his attitude towards his cases shows definite insight into his character. This indirect characterisation ascribes traits through "the actions a character performs" (Eder, Jannadis & Schneider 32) rather than explicit description. As both Holmes himself as well as Watson remark throughout the stories, Holmes could have become a terrible criminal "had he turned his energy and sagacity against the law, instead of exerting them in its defence" (*The Sign of the Four* 123). Therefore, it is important to explore Holmes's relation to and opinion of the cases he solves in order to see what aspects of Holmes's character made him into Sherlock Holmes the detective, instead of Sherlock Holmes the criminal.

The first feature I will explore about the cases Holmes solves throughout the analysed stories is that there are three possible relationships Holmes has to the cases he solves. Either he has no previous connection to the client that steps into 221B Baker Street, or he is familiar with the client due to a (vague) acquaintance, or the case is personal to Holmes and affects him particularly. I will discuss only the latter two relations, since a lack of previous connection to the client indicates there is also no closer personal connection to their cases.

"Dying Detective" is the only example in the analysed stories of a case that affects Holmes personally. As the title already suggests, Holmes is dying in this story. More specifically, Holmes is in the process of being murdered by a man called Culverton Smith, who has both a personal grudge against the detective and has already murdered another man in a similar fashion. The case seems to personally affect the dying Holmes, until he reveals that the attempt by Culverton Smith has failed and Holmes has lured him into confessing to the other murder. Holmes is not deeply affected by the attempt on his life in the end. This lack of personal effect on the detective suggests that, though Holmes as a character wants to solve crimes constantly, he still considers it to be a business he has to fulfil. Similar to Holmes's business-like behaviour towards his clients, he also handles his cases with a similar business-like approach.

The other possible relation Holmes has to a case is being a (vague) acquaintance of the client. Most of the time these include his earlier cases, which were brought to Holmes "principally through the introduction of old fellow-students" (726) or those he solves after his retirement to Sussex. Though Holmes may be familiar with the client, this does not mean that he treats the cases any differently from a regular case. Fitzroy McPherson is a science master from the coaching establishment near Holmes's place of retirement with whom he sometimes went swimming. When he dies under suspicious circumstances, Holmes's treatment of the case cannot be distinguished from all the other cases he has solved previously. This implies that

when an acquaintance of Holmes comes to the detective for help, Holmes does not take the case more personally or does he become biased. He solves the case as he would any other case, to the best of his intellectual abilities. Like the previous possible relation Holmes could have to a case, the detective solves cases from acquaintances in a similar fashion. They are business agreements which he has to solve impartially, no matter how well he knows the client.

The final significant aspect of Holmes's relationship with his cases that is part of his key characterisation is his strong opinion about justice. Even though the cases do not affect Holmes personally, he does have a strong opinion about what is right and wrong. This opinion is most visible through Holmes's interaction with, or opinion of, criminals throughout the stories.

In the case of Jonathan Small, the criminal of *Sign*, Holmes is intrigued by the man's motivations from the beginning. The detective even suspects there is more to the case of the missing Agra treasure than meets the eye. Even before apprehending Small, Holmes asks Inspector Athelney Jones for a conversation with the criminal. What immediately stands out about Holmes's interaction with Small is that he is very polite to the convict, even when Small snarls at inspector Jones. Holmes, in a quiet and business-like fashion, tells Small that he would like to hear his side of the story, since "we know nothing of all this ... we have not heard your story, and we cannot tell how far justice may have originally been on your side" (159). Small discloses his story to the detective, revealing that Major Sholto, the victim in the case according to justice, was the villain after all and that Small merely attempted to reclaim what was already his rightful property. Through Holmes's characteristic desire to know all the details of every case he solves, he has shown that not every criminal is simply evil, but that he can also be a man who has been wronged in the past and in reclaiming his property has to resort to crime. That does not mean that Small is cleared of all charges, as he is still brought to justice by the

police force, who only care about the laws being broken and not about the morality and past of the case.

In the case of Charles Augustus Milverton, Holmes's behaviour is the complete opposite to his attitude towards Small. From the beginning of the story the reader is told that Milverton is the "worst man in London" (962). Unlike Small, Milverton has actual criminal intend and no visible sense of morality. During the case, Holmes and Watson break into Milverton's house, which Menes argues Holmes must do so for his own good reasons, which is in this case preventing a young woman from having her life ruined (101). It is during this break-in that Holmes and Watson witness the murder of Milverton and are nearly caught while escaping the grounds. When Lestrade comes to Baker Street the next morning to ask for Holmes's help in solving Milverton's murder, Holmes's strong sense of right and wrong clearly comes to the surface.

> 'I am afraid I can't help you, Lestrade,' said Holmes. 'The fact is that I knew this fellow Milverton, that I considered him one of the most dangerous men in London, and that I think there are certain crimes which the law cannot touch, and which therefore, to some extent, justify private revenge ... My sympathies are with the criminals rather than with the victim, and I will not handle this case' (976)

Menes states that "while it is neither legally nor morally right to murder, Holmes does not in 'Charles Augustus Milverton' mourn a murdered man" (102). The detective does not mourn Milverton, since he considered the man to be a criminal with malicious intent and therefore has more sympathy for the murderers who acted as judge and executioner to save the world from a man such as Milverton.

Though indirect characterisation is more difficult to observe, this section has shown that Holmes's attitude towards his cases elaborates on known characteristics as well as introduce new traits to the detective's personality. Holmes treats his cases with the same business-like approach as he does with his clients. Above all else, Holmes is concerned with the moral right and wrong in a case. Something that can result in Holmes being polite and unjudgmental towards a criminal who turns out to have justice on his side as with Jonathan Small, or refusing to handle a murder case when the victim is a malicious criminal as with Charles Augustus Milverton.

Holmes's Overall Personality

The employment of the concepts of character constellations and indirect characterisation aided in creating an overall character structure of Holmes and revealing his key characterisations. It can be concluded that Holmes's character structure is very complex and contains multiple facets, which confirms the claim of Eder, Jannadis and Schneider that characters do not possess "only a few traits" (39). Holmes's main characterisation is of being a person of a mercurial nature, which reveals itself in many of his other character traits. These traits can often be seen in coupled dualities such as his machine-like, deductive logical side vs. the more emotional side of his personality. Holmes is also characterised as eccentric, which is mostly visible through his behaviour in solving his cases and through his drug using habit. What is significant about Holmes in relation with the other characters in the character constellation is that his behaviour is, though eccentric, mostly polite and gentlemanly. This also indicates a clear characterisation of the detective as being aware of how people would like to see him behave, which he does by behaving like a business-like gentleman at all times. The only person with whom he shows his, sometimes languid, disposition is Watson. He is the single character in the constellation that is actually close to Holmes and is therefore shown all

aspects of Holmes's character. The detective's attitude towards his cases is mostly governed by a distant business-like approach, similar to his behaviour towards his clients. This distant attitude does not mean that Holmes is not passionate about his cases, as indicated by Holmes's strong sense of moral right and wrong. These many facets of Holmes do not all come to the surface at all times, similar to any realistic human being, who only shows specific characteristics when they are required. It is his complexity that has made Holmes an iconic character and though the cases he solves prompt the action, it is the character and the eccentric manner of solving the cases that has made readers "hungry for more knowledge and ever eager to turn the page to unlock the mysteries behind the locked page" (Butler & Sienkiewics-Charlish 10). The readers want to know how the world's only consulting detective will use his odd mannerisms and eccentric yet ever polite ways to solve a seemingly impossible case, and applaud him in the way Watson and his clients do time and time again.

2.
Sherlock's Personality
Steven Moffat's & Mark Gatiss's Sherlock Holmes

> "Your best friend is a sociopath, who solves crimes as an alternative to getting high. That's me by the way. Hello." ("His Last Vow" 0:56:15 – 0:56:20)

Sherlock's description of himself is a broad explanation of how he sees himself. Due to the shift in focus towards the character of Sherlock, the personality of the detective becomes more pronounced and is dealt with in more detail throughout seasons three and four of *Sherlock.* This chapter will analyse the character of Sherlock in more depth, going beyond the brief explanation that the detective himself gives and creating a character structure for Sherlock as was done in the previous chapter for Holmes. Through a continuous comparison between Sherlock's characteristics and those of Holmes, I will reveal how the character has been reinterpreted and appropriated by Moffat and Gatiss. In this chapter, I will first discuss the show as an adaptation of the original stories as well as explore the attitude of Moffat and Gatiss toward the source material. Next, I will analyse key moments from season three and four that show Sherlock's innate personality. At its core, the character of Sherlock is the same as it was in season one and two. The only difference is the shift in focus from solving cases to exploring the personality of the detective. Therefore, previous studies on the televised detective can still be used in this analysis as their observations on the character in the first two seasons can still be compared to the third and fourth season material. This analysis of Sherlock's personality will flow into an exploration of Sherlock's behaviour towards other characters, aided by the concept of the character constellation. Next, I will use the concept of indirect characterisation in order to study the Sherlock's cases in season three, since season four's cases will be discussed in more detail in chapter three. Lastly, I will conclude that the complexity of Holmes

has largely been translated into Sherlock, though there are differences between the televised detective and its literary counterpart, which I will discuss in more detail in this chapter's conclusion.

Sherlock's Adaptational Origins

Like every adaptor of a Sherlock Holmes story, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss have added their own vision to Doyle's work. As Stephen Joyce states: "The cultural memory of Holmes is not identical with the canon as each new generation shapes its own idea of the great detective" (80), which fits in with Hutcheon's argument that "adaptation, like evolution, is a transgenerational phenomenon" (32). Moffat and Gatiss's adaptation takes the detective out of the Victorian Era and plants him into the twenty-first century, updating the stories to the modern era. This shift to twenty-first century London does not mean that the series eliminates the original stories entirely from their intertextual web. Moffat and Gatiss have stated explicitly that they are fans of Sherlock Holmes, saying they live it, breathe and love it ("Fans, Villains & Speculation" 0:14:55-0:15:04).[4] Moreover, they are not only fans of the stories, but also of the many Sherlock Holmes adaptations that have been made throughout the years. Nieves Rosendo argues, that the episodes can be watched for pure entertainment for those who are not familiar with Doyle's canon and only know the character through its fame in popular culture (22). Those who are familiar with Doyle's stories and the numerous film, television and theatre adaptations can find many allusions to these works throughout the episodes (Rosendo 22). They refer to these adaptations in the episodes and also state them as sources for their series in behind the scenes material (Rosendo 23; McClellan 15; "The Fall"[5] 0:11:55-0:12:28). However, Moffat and Gatiss also assert that their series is "a series about a detective, not a detective

[4] From this point on this extra material for *Sherlock* season 3 is referred to as F.V.S.
[5] Extra material to *Sherlock* season 3

series" (F.V.S. 0:08:57-0:09:01). Therefore, when comparing *Sherlock* to the four paradigms of adaptation discussed by Karen Kline, the one that best describes the type of adaptation of Sherlock is the pluralist paradigm (72). This pluralist paradigm states that an adaptation is able to "present a coherent fictive world within itself which bears significant traces of [the original material on an] abstract emotional/intellectual level" (Kline 71). In other words, it is faithful to the spirit of the source material. The BBC's *Sherlock* adapts Doyle's work by appropriating the material to fit a new generation (Hutcheon 7), while at the same time being a "palimpsestuous work" (Hutcheon 6). Their compilation and merging of Doyle's stories stretch *Sherlock*'s ties to its canonical predecessor and creates more room to develop new iconic characters and narratives (Garside 192). It is this balance of repetition and innovation that makes *Sherlock* the complex detective show that it is today, and its titular character is at the centre of it all.

Sherlock's Innate Personality Traits

This section will focus on the innate personality traits of Sherlock. Similar to the previous chapter, this will be done through a close reading of the episodes in terms of dialogue as well as visualisation, combined with previous research and interpretations of the character. Through a detailed discussion, this section will reveal the key traits that shape the character of Sherlock. These character traits will also be compared to those of Holmes to reveal any significant changes in the character structure.

The most prominent aspects of Sherlock's personality in the series are his intellect and deductive abilities, which are also the most essential in the eyes of the detective. Unlike Holmes, Sherlock considers his abilities to be so ordinary that anyone should be able to draw the same conclusions as he does without having been taught his manner of thinking. Therefore, he is oftentimes surprised when people do not understand how he came to a certain conclusion

(“The Lying Detective” 0:33:50 – 0:33:56). Sherlock appears to be in a constant state of deducing everyone around him, similar to Holmes. Yet, Sherlock is often unable to stop himself from “reading” people (“The Sign of Three” 0:09:01 – 0:09:14; “The Sign of Three” 1:22:00 – 1:22:19; “The Six Thatchers” 1:15:24 – 1:16:30). He “reads” mostly through observation, as Holmes did in “Blanched Soldier”, which is visualized in the series through an array of words circling the person being “read”. Aside from his keen observational skills, Sherlock also uses

Sherlock "reads" Mary (“The Empty Hearse” 0:26:21)

his other senses much in the same way as Holmes does. They are not very present in the series. When they are used they add to the deduction in a similar way as the observations do. For example, in “His Last Vow” Sherlock smells a perfume in a room and deducts which specific brand of perfume it is through faint smell alone. Like the “reading” of Mary Morstan pictured above, various perfume brands float in the air signifying Sherlock’s thoughts, eventually ending with the correct answer. This visualization of Sherlock’s mind is used often throughout the series. It gives the audience an insight into the methods of the detective without giving away its precise workings. This technique of visualising Sherlock’s thoughts is an aspect made possible by the medium of the series which could not have been so effectively portrayed in the

stories. Whenever the audience is lead into Sherlock's mind palace,[6] as the detective calls it, they learn more about his vast knowledge and way of thinking ("The Empty Hearse" 0:45:56 – 0:46:37). This knowledge is always present, covers a wide range of (trivial) subjects and hardly ever requires any further research, whereas Holmes did require this from time to time.

Sherlock's manner of investigating a crime scene can also be regarded as odd or eccentric. As mentioned above, the detective mostly uses his senses and he is not self-conscious about it. During the aforementioned smelling of perfume, Sherlock sniffs loudly multiple times, taking in the scent. Furthermore, his observations are mostly done through a small lens while his nose is nearly on the object of observation ("The Empty Hearse" 0:41:05 – 0:41:30), though he is also able to stand further away to make his observations, since he notices the minutest details at either distance ("The Empty Hearse" 0:42:27 – 0:42:32). Moreover, the words that float in the air to show the audience Sherlock's manner of thinking are also present for Sherlock himself. This often results in the detective wiping the ideas away when they are wrong, causing him to make both small and large gesticulations towards words that nobody else can see ("His Last Vow" 0:32:43 – 0:32:49; "The Lying Detective" 0:12:06 – 0:12:11). These gesticulations are often met with questioned looks from those surrounding the detective. All in all, Sherlock's behaviour while investigating a crime scene is dramatic and not always purely necessary to get a proper observation, which feeds into the eccentric side of his personality.

When considering eccentricity, another aspect of Sherlock's personality that requires attention is his substance use. Drugs are not very visible in the series, which is possibly due to them being illegal in modern times and its use is heavily frowned upon by the general public. However, as Lyndsay Faye states, even though the audience does not see Sherlock indulge in hard drugs, there are enough hints at Sherlock's addiction to suggest that there used to be a

[6] A memory technique Sherlock Holmes utilizes to store and be able to recollect all his knowledge.

time when he was not clean (4). It is in season three that the drugs become visible for the first time, particularly in "His Last Vow." The episode opens with John looking for his neighbour's son in a drug den, whom he finds, along with a dishevelled Sherlock. It is never made clear whether Sherlock is using at that point. Yet it is very clear that Sherlock is using morphine after he has been shot. Though there is a difference between using morphine as medication or actual drug use, Sherlock indulges in an excessive amount of morphine for an extended period of time, which makes it questionable whether or not he is still using morphine as a painkiller or whether it can be considered recreational drug use.

What is significant to note is that Sherlock knows that a large amount of morphine is "not good for working" ("His Last Vow" 0:43:35-0:43:37). Therefore, he lowers the dosage of his IV every time he wants to think clearly. Sherlock is aware of the negative effects of his drug use, yet he does not choose to stop using and later reveals that his stay at the drug den was for an undercover mission to make the villain believe he was still an addict. It is a significant part of his character merely because Sherlock Holmes is widely known to be a drug user. Sherlock's addiction is no longer a plot device that adds to the eccentric nature of the detective in the way it did for Holmes. Instead it has become a character flaw that makes Sherlock into more of a tortured figure, since the detective also perceives himself, as a "drug addict who solves crimes as an alternative to getting high" ("His Last Vow" 0:56:15-0:56:17). It has become a defining characterisation for the detective, yet not in a positive manner. This creates a more human-like character, since Sherlock no longer only consists of positive characteristics, but is flawed like any other human being.

The final features that are of interest to Sherlock's personality are his dramatic tendencies as well as his somewhat childlike behaviour, which go hand in hand. I already briefly discussed Sherlock's dramatic and eccentric handling of a crime scene above. However, the dramatic tendencies of the detective do not stop there. As John puts it very clearly in "The

Sign of Three": "You're not a puzzle solver, you never have been. You're a drama queen. Now there's a man about to die, the game is on, solve it" (1:14:13 – 1:14:20). It is not entirely justified to say that Sherlock only solves puzzles for the attention he gets for solving them. He solves many cases and they often do not get him any (media) attention. However, when it is a matter of life or death, Sherlock is prone to solving a case quicker, using the gravity of the moment to fuel his thinking. In terms of his more childish side, Sherlock can never resist a touch of drama, even when the situation is dire. When John and Sherlock are bound to die due to a bomb in an underground car, Sherlock cannot resist putting John through hell and making him think he is about to die, even after he had found the "off-switch." Though this can be, and is at times, considered rude and harmful behaviour, as Steven Moffat states, "the logic of it in a way is [he's] like this. Why do you expect [him] to be different?" ("The Empty Hearse" - Commentary 1:10:04-1:10:10). This argument by Moffat can be applied to much of Sherlock's personality in the series. Like Holmes, Sherlock is aware of his behaviour and even vocalises it during his best-man speech, saying that he is "the most unpleasant, rude, ignorant, and all-round obnoxious arsehole that anyone could have the misfortune to meet." ("The Sign of Three" 0:25:10 – 0:25:21). Yet, this is his innate, eccentric personality, which he cannot change.

Sherlock's Behaviour Towards Other Characters

The first feature that ought to be addressed in regards to Sherlock's relation to other characters is the aspect of the character constellation. When it comes to the stories, there is a large character constellation due to the clients and other people who Holmes meets during a case. Yet when it comes to a core character constellation which only includes the recurring characters, the only characters that can really be included in that constellation are the inseparable duo of Holmes and Watson. Though Sherlock and John are still the two most

important characters of the series, they are not the only two characters that come back every episode. In fact, the core character constellation for the series consists of seven characters: Sherlock, John, DI Greg Lestrade, Mycroft Holmes, Mrs Hudson, Molly Hooper and, from season three onward, Mary Watson-Morstan.

It is important to point out this larger core character constellation because the relationship between those specific characters are different from the characters who only appear in one or two episodes. This group of characters are the people Sherlock has an actual relationship with and who he truly cares for in his own peculiar way.

As a person, Sherlock relies heavily on intellect and often disregards emotion, which is not much different from Holmes. However, whereas Holmes is a gentleman who, though eccentric and somewhat curt, is always polite to his clients, Sherlock is usually on the verge of being derogative and rude. Characters who meet Sherlock for the first time quickly realize that he is "friendless and antagonistic toward everyone with whom he has contact. He is carelessly cruel to those who care for him as well as with his sparring partners" (Polasek 389). When a couple whose bank account has been emptied comes to Sherlock for help, Sherlock merely takes one look at the husband to realize that he is the one who emptied the bank account and quickly points out what he observed before handing a business card of a lawyer to the wife ("The Empty Hearse" 0:38:26 – 0:38:40). This rudeness is not restricted to clients and people he has just met. Sherlock's first response to being hit by Molly Hooper is a sarcastic "sorry your engagement is over, though I'm fairly grateful for the lack of a ring" ("His Last Vow" 0:12:22 – 0:12:25). What these selected few among many possible examples show is that Sherlock is, as Polasek argues, not a nice person.

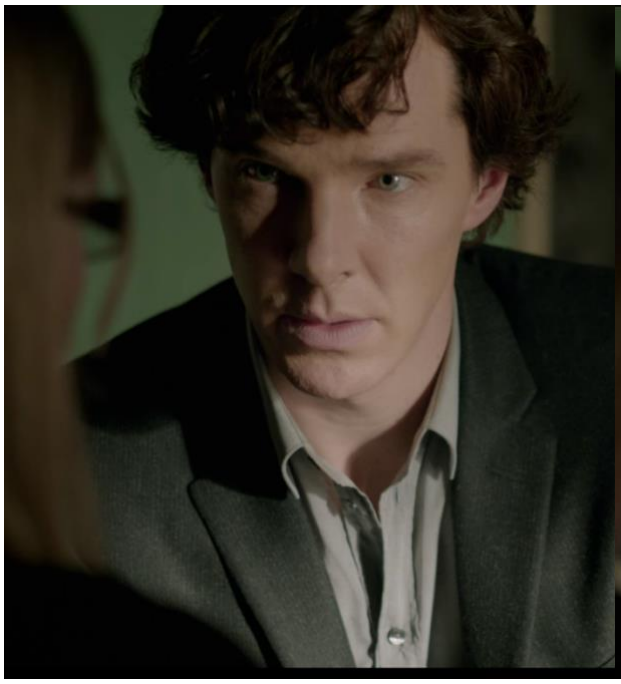
However, Polasek's statement about Sherlock's friendless and antagonistic personality reads as if Sherlock is deliberately being rude. Except, as Stephen Joyce asserts: "Sherlock is not simply dismissive of the feelings of others; he literally cannot understand them" (87). In

other words, he does not realize that his words might affect someone, either negatively or positively, since he does not understand them. During his best man speech, Sherlock finds himself faced with an emotional crowd after he has given an exceptionally good and emotional speech. Sherlock's immediate reaction is to turn to John, his "emotional mediator" (Polasek 390), and ask if he did something wrong ("The Sign of Three" 0:26:56 – 0:26:57). During a large portion of the series, Sherlock does not comprehend the emotions that people feel. He needs John around to help translate the normal world for him and John also translates Sherlock's machine-like manner of thinking to the clients. This relationship is again very similar to Holmes and Watson, who need each other in order to achieve their full potential (Ramday 68). As Eder, Jannadis and Schneider argue, "characters fill positions and roles in larger webs of relations" (45), which in the case of John means being the emotional mediator for Sherlock.

For the reason as to why Sherlock might not be able to properly assess people's emotions, one has to look no further than the terminology Sherlock uses to describe himself: "High-functioning sociopath" ("The Sign of Three" 0:10:40 - 0:10:42). According to Ziskind, Syndulko and Maltzman, a sociopath is "an individual whose behaviour is asocial or antisocial" which manifests in traits such as superficiality of affect, irresponsibility and impairment of conscious (202). Upon first glance these traits describe Sherlock quite accurately. Yet it is also possible that Sherlock is not a sociopath at all, but that it is rather a label he has given to his behaviour in order to stop people from judging him. Rebecca Beirne has argued that Sherlock belongs on the autistic spectrum, an argument that goes back to Doyle's stories (236). However, as Sonya Freeman states, most studies who consider Sherlock Holmes to be autistic paint him as an abnormality who is cold-blooded, rude and unable to have any warm relationships. However, both of these studies, as well as all the other studies regarding Sherlock Holmes's possible autism, should be assessed critically, since it is never specified in either the

stories or the series that Sherlock Holmes is autistic and it is impossible to psychologically test a fictional character. Furthermore, the studies regarding the possible autism of Sherlock Holmes, as well as the fact that Sherlock himself is quick to put himself in the box of sociopathy, might be due to the present-day tendency to want to put everyone in boxes. However, is there even a label that would fully explain Sherlock? Moreover, would it add to the character of Sherlock Holmes if he is given label and the enigma of his character is taken away? Sherlock is different from the norm and might not fully comprehend emotion, yet the only label that would fit him completely and would not take away the enigma of the character is the label that was also given to his Victorian namesake: eccentric.

In his interactions with others, Sherlock does have various grades of attempting to understand and portray emotion, which is also dependant on how much he cares for the other person. Most of these attempts are insincere and only utilized for the detective's personal gain. Actor Benedict Cumberbatch's portrayal of Sherlock makes these distinctions very clear. The actor's facial expressions give the audience a clear insight into how the detective feels, since he is able to differentiate between the genuine emotions and the feigned ones, allowing the audience to see feigned kindness and gentility in one moment, and the real boredom and annoyance with the same situation seconds later.



Sherlock caring (“The Empty Hearse” 0:38:53)

Sherlock annoyed (“The Empty Hearse” 0:39:02)

The most prominent example of Sherlock feigning emotion for his personal gain is in his regard of Janine. After having met her at John’s wedding, she becomes Sherlock’s girlfriend. The detective even goes so far as to propose to her, even though he has no intention of marrying her. In fact, he only pretended to be in love with her to break into her boss’s office. When John furiously objects to Sherlock’s cruel action, Sherlock responds coldly, saying that Janine falling in love with him was “human error” (“His Last Vow” 0:31:17 – 0:31:18). As Moffat states in the commentary: “All he has learned about human behaviour is how to manipulate it and really simulate all these emotions. ... [Yet] somehow, because he doesn’t get he is being vile, you sort of don’t hate him” (“His Last Vow” - Commentary 0:30:14 – 0:31:22). Though it does not fully excuse his cruelty, the audience understands where his behaviour comes from. Moreover, this particular instance is not even a creation from Moffat and Gatiss, since they re-imagined Holmes’s fake proposal to Charles Augustus Milverton’s maid during one of the stories. Therefore, there is a clear similarity in behaviour between the two characters,

since neither of them takes real pity on the girl for falling in love with the machine-like detective.

When it comes to the recurring characters in the core character constellation of *Sherlock*, Sherlock's show of emotion or lack thereof depends heavily on his physical and mental state. As has been shown earlier in this section, Sherlock is prone to being rude even towards those he has a close relationship with. The example of Molly Hooper is not the only one. Sherlock rudely dismisses Mrs Hudson when she says she does not have morphine in her kitchen ("His Last Vow" 0:55:18 – 0:55:21), and he nearly breaks his brother's arm for ransacking Baker Street in Sherlock's absence ("His Last Vow" 0:17:32 – 0:17:40) to name a couple of examples. However, these are instances of Sherlock reacting without thinking the way he usually would considering the fact that in two out of the three instances he was possibly high, which the episode never clarifies, and either in pain (Molly hitting him) or angry (Mycroft ransacking his flat), and in the final instance with Mrs Hudson he was, most likely, bleeding internally after being shot a week prior.

When Sherlock does think his words through, has a clear mind and can properly assess the situation and emotions of those he is close with, he can be a kind and considerate person. This kinder aspect to his character comes to light more and more as season three progresses. The shift in focus from solving cases to the changing personality of the detective creates more time for private and personal conversations, such as the one Sherlock has with Molly. During this brief conversation Sherlock thanks her for aiding him in faking his own death. He also congratulates her on her engagement and tells her that she deserves to be happy ("The Empty Hearse" 0:47:50 – 0:48:50). What this conversation shows is that Sherlock is capable of caring for someone. He is also capable of showing his appreciation for those he cares about. He does this clearly for John Watson during his best man speech by saying that John is the "bravest and kindest and wisest human being [he has] ever had the good fortune of knowing" ("The Sign of

Three" 0:25:38 – 0:25:44). Once he has formed a close relationship with someone, he is capable of wishing them all the best in life and willing to go through fire for them, literally ("The Empty Hearse" 0:54:59 – 0:55:20), to make sure that they are alright.

Sherlock, unlike his Victorian namesake, is not a gentleman and oftentimes does not even attempt to be civil. Still, the audience will not hate him for his cruel and inconsiderate behaviour, since his facial expressions and other presentational devices show that he does not understand that his behaviour is generally considered cruel. This does not mean that Sherlock has absolutely no genuinely kind attributes to him, since he would go to extraordinary lengths to help those with whom he has a close relationship. All in all, Sherlock's behaviour towards other characters can be characterised as very anti-social. When he has a close relationship with someone, Sherlock has tendencies towards politeness and kindness, provided that he can think clearly.

Sherlock, (Personal) Cases & Fallibility

Sherlock's close relationship to his core character constellation, and specifically to John and Mary, is also the main focus of the largest cases of season three and four, though season four's cases will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Sherlock's attitude towards and actions during these cases will reveal much about his characterisation through the earlier mentioned concept of indirect characterisation. Even though Sherlock still solves many cases in his role of consulting detective for clients he does not know, the most prominent of Sherlock's cases in season three begin to bleed into his personal life and his relations. It is in this respect that the shift in focus toward the detective's personality becomes very visible. This personalizing of cases does not happen instantaneously, since the first large case Sherlock has to solve is an imminent terrorist attack on London, which does affect his friends, but not on a personal level. In in the first episode of the season, however, John is kidnapped and put inside

a Guy Fawkes bonfire. This bonfire incident and the criminal behind it mark the beginning of the more personal criminal cases for Sherlock.

Sherlock's motivation for solving crimes does not change when his friends are the ones he has to save. He still wants to work out every detail about a case. Even though the detective cares about justice being served, he is above all, like Holmes, a "defender of social norms" (Menes 101). However, he does become more motivated and determined to solve a case when his friends are in danger. This ties in with a previous statement that in a matter of life and death, and additionally friendship, Sherlock is more driven to solve a case quickly.

In season three, Sherlock's most personal case involves the season's main villain: Charles Augustus Magnussen, a newspaper magnate and the series' version of Charles Augustus Milverton. Sherlock has a strong opinion of the man, stating that "none can turn [his] stomach like Charles Augustus Magnussen" ("His Last Vow" 0:20:08 – 0:20:14). For the first time, as Steven Moffat points out, Sherlock expresses real hate towards someone, similar to the way in which Holmes voiced his hatred towards Milverton ("His Last Vow" - Commentary 0:03:05 – 0:03:20).

The case of Magnussen starts out with a client who Sherlock has never dealt with before, who hires him to mediate with Magnussen about a specific blackmail case. The case quickly becomes personal when Sherlock realizes that Mary is also under threat of blackmail by Magnussen. When the detective breaks into Magnussen's office, he witnesses Mary nearly shooting the man, but she stops in her tracks when she notices her husband's best friend in the doorway. From this point onward, the initial client disappears from the narrative and Sherlock's only priority is ensuring Mary's safety.

What has also become more noticeable in season three is the fact that Sherlock does make mistakes. The stories merely address that Holmes does not always solve a case (Menes 102), whereas Sherlock can be seen making mistakes, wrong assumptions or not solving a case

at all. The first instance of this is his inability to diffuse the bomb in “The Empty Hearse,” though this eventually turns out to be irrelevant since the bomb had an “off-switch.” Then, in “The Sign of Three,” Sherlock unfolds the entire case of the “Bloody Guardsman,” only to reveal by the end of the story that that was a case he did not solve (0:43:16 – 0:43:24). These unimportant and trivial hints at Sherlock’s fallibility become more relevant in the third and final episode, where the detective is faced with Magnussen and makes various miscalculations which have grave consequences.

Sherlock’s first large miscalculation is due to his friendship with John. Because John loves Mary and she offers to help them get back together, he overlooks the fact that she is a “Liar” (“The Empty Hearse” 0:26:11 – 0:26:20) during his reading of her. He only realizes his mistake when he catches her nearly killing Magnussen (“His Last Vow” 0:33:48 – 0:33:56). This miscalculation results in Sherlock being shot by Mary, someone he had grown quite thick with (“His Last Vow” - Commentary 0:27:56 – 0:28:00). However, Sherlock’s largest miscalculation of the episode comes later, when he misjudges his adversary Magnussen. Sherlock is adamant in freeing Mary from Magnussen’s grasp, even after she has shot him. He is faithful to her since he has gotten closer with her and cares for her. The mistake stems from the fact that Sherlock assumes that Magnussen’s Appledore vaults are, as they are in the stories, a large archive of physical letters and incriminating footage. When he enters the vault, however, Sherlock quickly realizes that the Appledore vaults are in actuality Magnussen’s mind palace, placing all the incriminating evidence in the newspaper magnate’s head (“His Last Vow” 1:15:57 – 1:16:02). Whereas Holmes and Watson were mere witnesses to the murder of Milverton, Sherlock’s miscalculation, combined with his hatred towards Magnussen and his personal affection towards both John and Mary leads to him taking great measures to assure Mary’s safety. After ensuring himself that “Appledore‘s vaults only exist in [Magnussen’s]

mind, nowhere else" ("His Last Vow" 1:20:55 – 1:20:59), he shoots Magnussen in the head, killing him and assuring Mary's safety, while himself becoming a murderer in the process.

In short, though there are still "regular" puzzles and cases for Sherlock to solve, the most important cases in season three are those that involve the people he is closest to, in particular John and Mary. Aside from the ever-present urge to solve every case, this personal involvement motivates Sherlock to solve these cases as thoroughly as possible. There appears to be nothing more important to him than making sure those around him are all right, something that was never relevant in any of the analysed stories. It adds another layer to the detective's character, as he is even willing to resort to murder if it means his friends are safe.

Sherlock's Overall Personality

The character of Sherlock in the BBC's *Sherlock* is as much a complex character as his Victorian namesake. Still, the series fits Linda Hutcheon's general statement that "adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it ... Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators" (20). Moffat and Gatiss interpreted the character of Holmes and reinterpreted him to fit a more modern audience. This means that certain aspects of Sherlock's character have been accentuated, such as his dramatic tendencies and his manner of thinking, while other features, such as Holmes's mercurial personality and the dualities it causes have disappeared entirely. What is important to note is that Sherlock has been recreated into an even more anti-social character than he already was. He hardly attempts to, and at times seems to not know how to be polite towards others. Sherlock is capable of forming a warm relationship with a couple of characters, thus opposing the arguments that Sherlock might fit perfectly in the sociopathy box he placed himself in.

In the series Sherlock is surrounded by a larger core constellation of characters compared to the stories. Season three also shows him to be more empathetic towards his friends

and wishing them all the best for their lives, though not always in the most tactful manner. When Mary becomes the focal point of one of his cases and John's life is threatened, Sherlock shows himself to be a loyal and, above all, devoted friend who would go to great lengths to protect those he loves. This devotion on Sherlock's side of the friendship is a character trait that is not really visible in Holmes. It emphasises Moffat and Gatiss's focus on the friendship between Sherlock and John. The series not only shows the more vulnerable side of Sherlock, it also highlights his flaws and fallibility, which creates a more rounded, human character instead of only the calculating logical machine. All in all, Moffat and Gatiss's adaptation of the detective is in many ways faithful Doyle's character, amplifying aspects such as his anti-social nature, but taking out the deeper meaning behind Sherlock's drug use. They created their own interpretation of the character, whom audiences love despite his rudeness.

3.
The Melodramatic *Sherlock*

> "Every choice you've ever made. Every path you've ever taken. The man you are today, is your memory of Eurus." ("The Final Problem" 0:10:34 – 0:10:42)

In season four of *Sherlock*, Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss really take their statement that the show is not a detective series but a series about a detective (F.V.S. 0:08:57-0:09:01) to heart. The cases become less present in the most recent season of the series, and those that are present take a backseat to the personal troubles of the central trio of the previous season: Sherlock, John and Mary. The shift that begun in season three has now fully tipped the scales towards a more character focused series. Specifically, the series' creators take a more melodramatic approach to the drama. This idea that season four is more melodramatic may sound like harsh criticism of the series. James L. Smith argues that being melodramatic is "probably the dirtiest word a drama critic dare print" (5). However, the suggestion that Moffat and Gatiss have taken a more melodramatic approach in comparison with the previous seasons does not take away from the fact that this is a detailed and well-crafted series. The term melodrama is simply the term that best describes the central themes of season four of *Sherlock* as the prime focus of the series has become the character of Sherlock and the audience watches his character, as well as his life, unravel as the season progresses.

Sherlock is not an example of low melodrama such as soap operas. Instead it is an ambitious melodrama, which Brooks states "may appear to be the very process of reaching a fundamental drama of the moral life" (12). Nor does the fact that *Sherlock* shifts towards a melodrama mean that it has no connection with the detective genre anymore, since "melodrama traverses a number of genres" (Landy 15) and is therefore able to co-exist with the detective narrative. This chapter will discuss the central themes that come up in season four in regards to Sherlock's character and the unravelling of his life. These themes and characteristics will be

compared to the innate personality of Holmes in Doyle's stories to see where they are either similar or deviate from the canon as well as how they are characteristic for either melodrama or the detective genre. Firstly, I will explore how Sherlock's personality traits are exaggerated during the majority of season four. Secondly, I will analyse Sherlock's backstory as it is revealed through the introduction of Eurus Holmes. Lastly, I will analyse the final minutes of the last episode, which reveal that the entire series as it has been portrayed, was in fact a large origin story to how Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson became the most iconic detective duo in existence.

Sherlock's Exaggerated Personality Traits

Sherlock's character in season four is not different at its core from season three, which the examples drawn from season four that were presented in the previous chapter also indicate. What is noteworthy is that his personality becomes more exaggerated in its innate characteristics.

Firstly, whereas Sherlock is known to focus all his attention on his cases and not pay much attention to the people, either clients or friends, around him, in season four his phone becomes a perfect tool to visually show Sherlock's absentmindedness in the first episode. This addiction to his phone has never occurred before this season, since Sherlock only used it in previous episodes to look up knowledge he did not possess himself, such as the weather. In "The Six Thatchers," Sherlock is fixed on his phone, constantly typing while also solving cases on his laptop or in person at the same time. Though the audience is never shown what the detective is doing on his phone, it clearly indicates that Sherlock is not engaged with what is happening in his life, as he is even busy typing during the christening of John and Mary's daughter. On top of this, Sherlock is also positioned away from the group on several occasions, visualising his solitary bubble which is only sometimes pierced by John ("The Six Thatchers"

0:07:56 – 0:09:10). All of these instances emphasize how Sherlock has completely submerged

Sherlock separated from the group ("The Six Thatchers" 0:07:57)

himself into his work and the logical thinking that comes with it, not opening himself up to emotion. As Molly Hooper sarcastically states during the christening: "No idea why people think you're incapable of human emotion" ("The Six Thatchers" 0:08:50 – 0:08:54). However, as noted in the previous chapter, Sherlock is capable of showing emotion toward his friends, which makes this absentminded behaviour a determined decision from the detective.

The moment Sherlock finds an A.G.R.A. memory stick similar to the one Mary had containing everything about her secret past, the detective's absentmindedness suddenly disappears. He remembers the vow he made to his friends and asserts to Ajay, a fellow assassin from Mary's former team, that "she is [his] friend, and she is under [his] protection" ("The Six Thatchers" 0:40:03 – 0:40:08). As he did in season three, Sherlock immediately goes to great lengths to make sure his friends are safe. Yet when Sherlock and Mary meet the person who betrayed Mary's team, Vivien Norbury, Sherlock's purely logical absentmindedness of constantly solving cases, and therefore essentially his own personality, becomes, as Steven Moffat states in the behind the scenes footage of "The Six Thatchers," his worst enemy. The

detective cannot stop himself from making a "series of damaging, hurtful deductions" ("Behind 221B: The Six Thatchers" 0:15:36 – 0:15:39), which lead Vivien to point a gun at Sherlock and shoot, a bullet that is caught by Mary who jumps between the bullet and her friend, fatally wounding her. Though it is impossible to read the detective's mind, his facial expressions show his distress as he watches Mary die, his voice trembling when she addresses him ("The Six Thatchers" 1:18:10 – 1:18:33). It is at that moment, when Mary dies in John's arms, that

Sherlock witnessing Mary's death ("The Six Thatchers" 1:18:20)

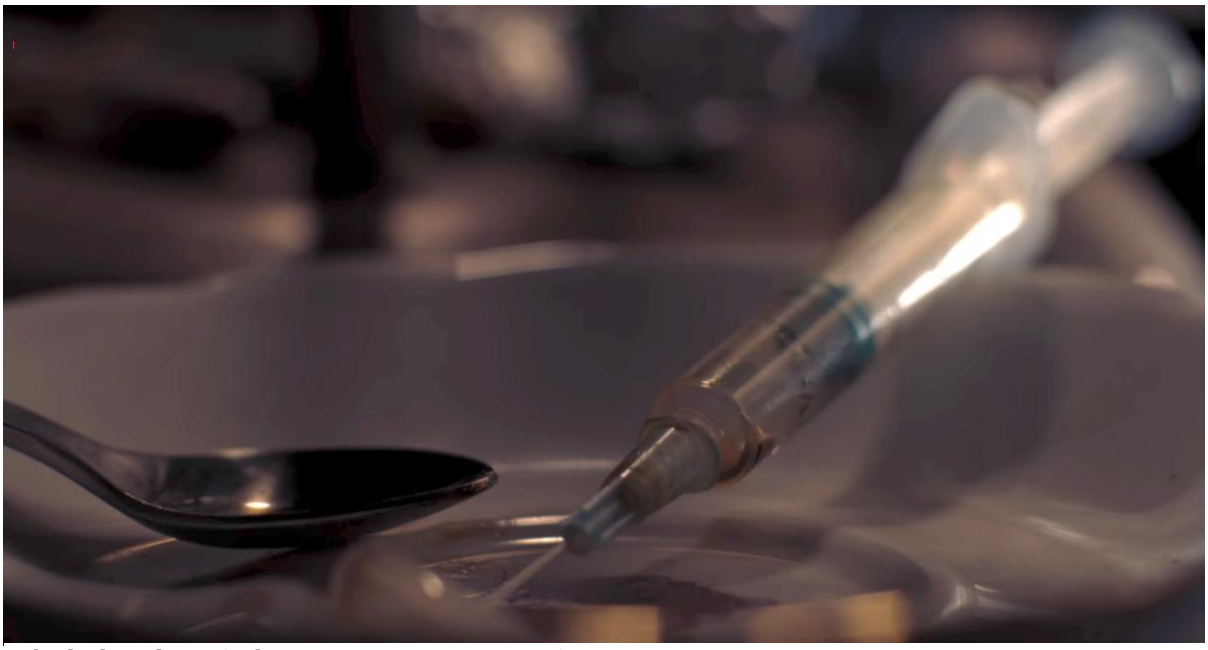
Sherlock becomes aware of the negative consequences of his abilities and his constant use of them. This realisation leads to him asking Mrs Hudson if she could say the word "Norbury" if he ever becomes too cocky or full of himself ("The Six Thatchers" 1:23:56 – 1:24:14) in order to keep him grounded and never allow what happened to Mary to happen again. Sherlock is feeling strong emotions he has not experienced before. By putting a large emphasis on them, they also evoke a similar reaction from the audience, which Eder, Jannadis & Schneider define as empathic appraisal.

In the first episode of the season, it is clearly established that this season will revolve around Sherlock's suffering and going through crises such as grieving the death of a friend,

both of which are prime examples of what melodrama is about (Landy 14; Zarzosa 51). Sherlock genuinely grieves the loss of his friend. He even portrays a textbook example of the first stage of grief, denial (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 10), when he pushes himself to get back to work as it is "the best antidote to sorrow" ("The Six Thatchers" 1:23:44 – 1:23:47). However, Sherlock himself does not actually know what he is doing, referring to his papers and laptop as "things" ("The Six Thatchers" 1:23:34 – 1:23:37). This genuine grief is further indication that Sherlock is capable of feeling human emotion, though his hurtful deductions towards Vivien Norbury indicate that he cannot always correctly interpret them due to his purely logical mindset. Brooks argues that melodrama insists that "life be seen always through highly coloured lenses" (3-4), which the sudden and wide range of emotions (or lack thereof) clearly indicate. Sherlock goes from being completely absentminded and emotionless at the beginning of the episode to feeling enormous grief and self-loathing by the end of it, a drastic and intense emotional change which, according to John Cawelti, is "essential to melodramatic incident" (37).

Sherlock's self-loathing becomes even more prominent in the second episode of the season, as he relapses into his old drug habit. It is never specified what Sherlock takes, but the first shot of the detective in episode two clearly shows that he is not his normal self and it is

clear that he is using again when a syringe next to his chair is shown in close up. The detective



Sherlock's relapse (“The Lying Detective” 0:12:44)

blames himself for Mary’s death, since it was his deductions that lead to Vivien Norbury pulling the trigger. On top of that, John strengthens this guilt by also blaming his former best friend for his wife’s passing. Whether or not it is due to Sherlock’s feeling of guilt towards Mary’s death that he turns to drugs, it is clear that Sherlock does not value his own life much as he is physically destroying it through the amount of drugs he is using. In Sherlock’s own words, by “saving [his] life, [Mary] conferred a value on it. It is a currency [he does] not know how to spend” (“The Lying Detective” 1:17:39 – 1:17:46). That is to say, the detective himself does not value his life as much as the lives of his friends and by saving his, Mary showed that she valued Sherlock’s life more than he ever did. Sherlock’s low value of his own life is a new characterisation that becomes very foregrounded throughout season four.

In “The Lying Detective,” Sherlock appearance tells the audience much about the decrepit state of the detective. In this episode Sherlock’s usual suit, coiffed hair and clean-shaven face have been replaced with a crinkled button up shirt, matted hair, a stubble and an

overall haggard look. Furthermore, though Sherlock's mind still functions at its regular speed,

Haggard Sherlock ("The Lying Detective" 0:34:04)

the detective can no longer keep up with it, resulting in him noticing important clues and doing things without knowing why and only minutes later catching up with what he noticed and what that might suggest about the case at hand. As Sherlock states himself, he has still got it in his head, but physically he is "at the bottom of a pit and [he's] still falling, and [he's] never climbing out" ("The Lying Detective" 0:34:06 – 0:34:11). In order to be able to catch the criminal of the episode, Culverton Smith, Sherlock needs the help of John Watson, whether the latter likes it or not.

Sherlock and Watson do reconcile, though it does not happen instantly and takes the majority of the episode. It is only when it is revealed that Sherlock's case was not necessarily to stop Culverton Smith, but that it was a post-mortem assignment from Mary to get him and John back together to solve a case, that John realizes how much his friend needs him. By this time, it is nearly too late for the detective, who has, again, put himself in harm's way. This time he is being suffocated to death by Culverton Smith and it is up to John to save him, which he does. For the second time within two episodes, Sherlock has put his life at risk for his friends,

either to convince them to save him or to keep his friends safe. It again foregrounds the characterisation of Sherlock's low value of his life, since he nearly gets killed twice within two episodes and did his body permanent damage through his drug use, which resulted in, according to Sherlock himself, malnourishment, double kidney failure and, of course, being "of [his] tits for weeks" ("The Lying Detective" 1:13:15 – 1:13:19).

Sherlock and John's actual reconciliation is the first time in season four that Sherlock actually shows emotion, without hiding behind a front of logic. In this moment Sherlock comforts his grieving best friend telling him that "it is what it is" ("The Lying Detective" 1:22:22 – 1:22:26). Both of them have been hurt by Mary's passing, but they eventually find each other again, which only happens when Sherlock takes off his purely logical and emotionless front, shows his own emotions and learns to empathise with those of others.

In terms of genre, the second episode of season four comes closer to a TV detective episode. Sherlock's main prerogative is to unmask and capture the criminal Culverton Smith, which he does in the end. In fact, "The Lying Detective" neatly follows Mike Westlake's idea of a classic criminal with Culverton Smith, who is a rational, though evil man, who chooses to kill for pleasure (38). Yet, the case is only a story within a larger scheme of things, since the reconciliation of John and Sherlock's friendship as well as the self-destruction of the detective through his drug use are at the core of the episode. Moreover, the ending of the episode is the only moment that the overall well-crafted series can be compared to a soap opera, since it ends on a rather dramatic cliff-hanger with the reveal of Sherlock's secret sister Eurus Holmes, who shoots John in the final shot of the episode. This violent appeal to emotion, though in this case from the audience, gives the episode a melodramatic touch, adhering to James Smith's description of the term melodrama (5).

In summary, what this section has shown is that in season four of *Sherlock*, Sherlock's characterisation, though similar to season three at its core, becomes more exaggerated in areas

such as his completely emotionless, logical mindset while also making the detective's emotional journey much more intense. This is in accordance with the argument that the genre of the series has shifted towards melodrama, which is known for its intense emotions and focus on crises and suffering. Benedict Cumberbatch states in the behind the scenes footage: "Watson loses his wife, it's not very touched upon in the stories. It becomes a very essential part of ours. Sherlock's role in that moment is pretty important" ("Behind 221B: The Six Thatchers" 0:17:45 – 0:17:55). As this section has shown, not only has Sherlock's role in Mary's death become very important in *BBC Sherlock*, but also his response to the passing of his friend and the impact that it has on his friendship with John has become crucial to the series as a whole.

Sherlock's Backstory and Childhood Trauma

Arthur Conan Doyle never gave Holmes a backstory. The detective's only family present in the stories is his brother Mycroft Holmes. Even he is only mentioned in four of the stories. In *Sherlock* the detective's older brother is far more prominent throughout the seasons and is deeply involved in Sherlock's life. Season three already goes further than the stories with Moffat and Gatiss introducing Sherlock's parents. This introduction gives an insight into the family dynamic of the brothers, especially when they are seen celebrating Christmas as a family. In season four this family dynamic becomes the central theme of the third and final episode of the season. Episode two ends on a cliff-hanger, with the reveal of Mycroft and Sherlock's secret sister Eurus Holmes. She becomes the main antagonist of the third episode "The Final Problem," in which she plays an elaborate emotional game with both her brothers and John. There are criminal cases present throughout this episode, as well as direct references to the canon. However, similar to "The Lying Detective," these cases are not as important as the family relations and the reliving of Sherlock's childhood trauma through Eurus's emotional experiment.

At the root of the episode is the idea of Sherrinford Holmes, which was the name Doyle initially used for the detective before changing his name to Sherlock. The name survived in early drafts of *The Study in Scarlet* (Pavett 18) and has since been transformed into the "non-canonical idea of there being another brother, called Sherrinford" ("Sherlock: Writer's Chat" 0:01:30 – 0:01:34). In Moffat and Gatiss's adaptation of this idea, they have changed the gender of the sibling, creating the secret sister Eurus Holmes, with the name Sherrinford being the facility in which she has been incarcerated from an early age. Sherlock does not remember her, due to the traumatic disappearance of what Sherlock believes to be his dog Redbeard that lead to Sherlock rewriting his memories and deleting his sister from his mind. However, as Mycroft states, "every choice you've ever made. Every path you've ever taken. The man you are today, is your memory of Eurus" ("The Final Problem" 0:10:34 – 0:10:42). This statement, in combination with Mycroft's assertion that Sherlock was "in the early days, an emotional child" ("The Final Problem" 0:13:13 – 0:13:16) shows that Sherlock has been shaped by both his childhood trauma as well as his sister. This reconnection of severed familial ties, which Landy argues to be one of the crises that drive melodramatic narratives, marks a point in Sherlock's life where he can become a whole human being again through Eurus's emotional experiment and having to come to terms with the trauma he went through as a child.

During Eurus's emotional experiment Sherlock learns to accept both the logical and emotional aspects of his personality, something that the people he goes through the experiment with neatly signify. Sherlock goes through the various tasks that Eurus has set for him with John and Mycroft, and is required to ask for help from either one with every task. What is noteworthy is that Sherlock asks Mycroft for help first every time. However, Mycroft refuses to help either because he "will not kill" ("The Final Problem" 0:44:34 – 0:44:35) or he "will not be manipulated like this" ("The Final Problem" 0:51:48 – 0:51:51). As has been the case for the entire series, Mycroft is a completely logic-driven man who acts without emotion and

does not like to, and therefore hardly does any, "field work" ("The Empty Hearse" 0:11:24 – 0:11:27). He is under no circumstances willing to go out of his way to help someone else and is not concerned with other people's emotions. Contrarily, when John is asked to help he jumps to the opportunity to aid Sherlock. John, unlike Mycroft, is driven by emotion, going as far as to ask the Governor for his name when the ultimate goal is to kill the man ("The Final Problem" 0:45:35 – 0:45:37). This is also the doctor's flaw, since asking for a name makes it a personal affair which he cannot morally justify for himself. However, this does not take away from the fact that John is willing to jeopardize his own moral code to help another person.

These two drastically different men have been given a more rounded personality throughout the series. Yet in "The Final Problem" they are essentially two-dimensional characters, who represent one aspect of Sherlock's personality each. This idea of the two-dimensional character is something that comes up in melodrama as well. Brooks exemplifies this characterization through the distinction between good and evil, which are "highly personalized: they are assigned to ... persons who indeed have no psychological complexity but who are strongly characterized" (17). This distinction between good and evil can also be applied to logic and emotion, which is personified in Mycroft and John, respectively. Throughout Eurus's experiment, Sherlock has to choose between help from his purely logical side or his emotional side. The fact that Mycroft is unwilling to help Sherlock throughout Eurus's experiment whereas John is, shows that pure logic alone cannot aid Sherlock neither in his tasks nor in his life and that he needs emotional context in order to fully function and properly solve his cases.

The distinction between Sherlock's emotional and logical side through John and Mycroft is most important during the fourth task of Eurus's experiment, where Sherlock is forced to choose between either his friend or his brother and kill the other. Mycroft is quick to assert that he and Sherlock should continue, since "whatever lies ahead requires brainpower ...

not sentiment" ("The Final Problem" 1:05:44 – 1:05:48). John, though reluctant at first, eventually agrees with Mycroft, willing to sacrifice his own life for the greater good, similar to how far Sherlock is willing to go for the safety of his friends. Nevertheless, Sherlock does not want to kill his best friend, pointing the gun at Mycroft instead. When considering the personification of logic and emotion as discussed above, it suggests that Sherlock does not want to kill his emotional side and be fully logical. If he is forced to choose, he would rather kill his machine-like personality in order to get closer to his emotional self. Sherlock's inclination towards emotion/John is also visualised with both John and Mycroft standing opposite Sherlock in a white rectangle, but the detective standing more on John's side than Mycroft's or completely in the middle.

Sherlock's inclination towards emotion/John ("The Final Problem" 1:05:52)

In the end, Sherlock also refuses to kill Mycroft. Though they may banter, he is still his brother and part of Sherlock's inner circle. Furthermore, in light of the representation of logic, Sherlock realizes that Mycroft, and therefore his own logic, is an innate part of him, which he cannot simply kill. If he wants to live his life as a whole human being he needs both his friend and his brother, that is, his emotion and his logic. Therefore, it is impossible to choose either one of the two and it would then be easier to live with neither. By pointing the gun at himself

Sherlock shows multiple facets of his personality at once. He is willing to die in order to save those he loves, as he has done multiple times before, and he has become aware of the fact that to be a whole person he has to be both emotional and logical, or no person at all.

There is also the aspect of Sherlock having to come to terms with the part of his childhood that he repressed. Trauma and suffering are, according to Zarzosa, a primary concern of melodrama (51), which makes the focus on Sherlock's childhood trauma another example of the genre shift. The focus on this trauma takes up the last section of the episode, in which Sherlock returns to his childhood home, Musgrave Hall, where he has to solve the "Musgrave ritual. [His] first case" ("The Final Problem" 1:13:30 – 1:13:33). This is the clearest example in the fourth season of a personalised case that has been heavily inspired by the Holmes stories, since it was based on "The Musgrave Ritual" and "The Gloria Scott," both of which are early cases of Holmes. Musgrave Hall in the stories was the ancestral home of one of Holmes's college acquaintances instead of the Holmes ancestral home, and "The Gloria Scott" was a case Holmes solved for his only college friend Victor Trevor.

In the adaptation, Victor Trevor is nicknamed Redbeard, Sherlock's only childhood friend whom Eurus put at the bottom of a well to die because she had no one to play with and wanted to get her brother's attention. Sherlock only remembers this repressed truth late in the episode, when Eurus is about to "drown another one of [his] pets" ("The Final Problem" 1:13:23 – 1:13:24), since she has put John at the bottom of the same well. Sherlock now has a second chance to save both his best friend and his sister, who he now realises is not just torturing him, but desperate for "him to listen to her and to bring her out of her head and her thoughts" ("Behind 221B: The Final Problem" 0:19:25 – 0:19:29). Though the moral thing to do would be to only save John, since Eurus is a murderer, Sherlock is determined to save both his friend and his sister while at the same time still processing the death of Victor. This segment of "The Final Problem" is a clear example once more for melodrama, with its highly stark

ethical conflict as well as a strong appeal to the emotions of both Sherlock and the audience (Brooks 12; Smith 7). This strong appeal to the emotions of the audience is also another example of empathic appraisal. Moreover, Sherlock's behaviour towards Eurus also mirrors Holmes's behaviour towards Jonathan Small, the criminal in the eyes of justice, but whose story convinced Holmes that the man was not the real criminal. Sherlock has realized that he disregarded his sister in the past, which lead her to do horrible things. However, these horrors do not mean that she deserves no help in the eyes of the detective, since she was not the one who was initially at fault: Sherlock himself was.

By the end of the episode, Sherlock remembers the repressed parts of his childhood and has confronted the trauma of losing his childhood best friend, as well as having realised that he needs both his emotion and his logic to be a complete person. Sherlock has become the epitome of the undivided, good, melodramatic man who is, according to Smith, "free from agony of choosing between conflicting imperatives ... courageous ... untroubled by cowardice, weakness or doubt, self-interest or thought of self-preservation" (7-8), or in other words: whole. This wholeness is translated into being very caring to those he loves, which also includes Eurus, while still having the intellectual abilities that used to define him entirely. This is verbalised in Sherlock's conversation with DI Greg Lestrade, whose first name he has never been able to get right, simply because he did not care. This time around, however, he is kind towards Lestrade and ends their conversation by saying "Thanks, Greg" ("The Final Problem" 1:22:01 – 1:22:02), surprising both John and Lestrade. In a following interaction between Lestrade and a police officer, the DI's statement ties back to the very first episode of the series, in which Lestrade stated that "Sherlock Holmes is a great man. And ... one day ... he might even be a good one" ("Study in Pink" 1:07:11 – 1:07:19). In "The Final Problem," when told that Sherlock is a great man, he says "he's better than that, he is a good one" (1:22:15 – 1:22:20). Sherlock has become a whole, well-rounded human being who, though he may still have his

eccentricities and might not always fully comprehend human emotion, is able to access both his logical and emotional personality traits to solve his cases from that point onward.

It Was All an Origin Story

Steven Moffat concludes his contributions to the behind the scenes material for "The Final Problem" with the following words:

> "We had a sort of story idea for the whole series, which is: How do Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson get to be the heroes we've always known. ... [The Final Problem] kind of is the story that ends the process of them, kind of, living up to the legend. Sherlock Holmes figures out, that's who he is, he is just gonna be that now." ("Behind 221B: The Final Problem" 0:20:17 – 0:20:42)

It was clear from the first season that Sherlock and John were younger than other incarnations of the detective, which the appearances of the actors as well as statements by the creators indicated. The idea that Sherlock was still becoming the iconic detective throughout the series also clarifies as to why the series shifted from a detective narrative towards a melodrama. Sherlock Holmes will always be famous for solving his crimes, which is still an essential part of the series by season four. However, in order to create the personal journey from a young Sherlock to the iconic consulting detective, he would need a backstory. In order to achieve this backstory, the creators shifted the focus of the final season away from the cases, and towards more emotional and character-based episodes, the latter of which is an especially key aspect of melodrama (Smith 7; Brooks 3-4; Cawelti 37). By the end of the season, Sherlock has completed his personal journey by embracing both his logical and emotional sides as well as coming to terms with all aspects of his life. Furthermore, Sherlock's friendship with John

has been put through the worst with his suicide, return from the dead and the passing of Mary, but the detective and army doctor have come out stronger and inseparable on the other side. As Mary's video during the episode's final montage states: "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 Watson" ("The Final Problem" 1:27:50 – 1:28:15).

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed how the character of Sherlock Holmes has been adapted from Doyle's stories and reimagined as the modern-day detective in the BBC's TV series *Sherlock.* It has also investigated how the character of Sherlock develops throughout seasons three and four of the series. This was done by using the concepts of (indirect) characterisation, character constellation and character structure from Character Studies, as well as the concepts of reinterpretation, appropriation and palimpsestuous work from Adaptation Theory. From the analysis conducted it is possible to conclude that, at their core, Holmes and Sherlock are very much the same. They are both complex and multi-faceted characters in terms of their combination of great intellect, a strong sense of right and wrong and their (sometimes) dramatic outbursts. However, some aspects of the Victorian detective have been lost in his televised counterpart, such as Holmes's drug use adding to his eccentric nature and his mercurial personality. This does not take away from the fact that Sherlock is at all times haunted by the iconicity of his namesake and is, as such, a palimpsestuous character (Hutcheon 6). Moffat and Gatiss have stayed true to the spirit of the stories they love so much, and have done the same with its main character, staying true to what the detective stands for and what characterizes him in broad terms. Nevertheless, they have also interpreted the stories in their own way and created their own version of the detective. As Hutcheon states: "adapting can be a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another's story, and filtering it" (18). Moffat and Gatiss have definitely done this in season four of the series, where they expanded the world of Sherlock Holmes by giving the detective an elaborate backstory. This lead to a more emotional and character-based season which had many characteristics of a melodrama, allowing the detective to go through a highly emotional personal journey.

A significant aspect to address about the character structures of Holmes and Sherlock is that there is one large distinction between the two. Holmes is very much static in his

characterisation, since he begins and ends the stories in a very similar fashion: he is an intellectual man who is mostly governed by his logic, but who knows how to behave as a gentleman towards everyone, though only showing his full personality to Dr Watson. Sherlock, on the other hand, is dynamic in his character structure, since his personality changes throughout the series. Especially season four, with its melodramatic genre and the focus on the character of the detective shows a shift in the character of Sherlock from a purely logic-driven person to a whole human being who can access both his logical and emotional side. This difference in character structure can also be linked to the fact that *Sherlock* is an origin story to the iconic duo of Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson. Whereas Holmes already knows who he is and therefore acts like himself throughout all of the stories, Sherlock was still becoming that iconic detective throughout the series. His dynamic character structure can therefore be interpreted as being the young detective still developing into the iconic detective.

By the end of "The Final Problem", the origin story of the young Sherlock Holmes is complete and he has figured out who he is. This does not mean that there is no more to observe about the modern-day detective's personality, since not even this study was able to point out all the details that have been dispersed throughout, not only season three and four, but all episodes of the series. However, the most prominent points have been discussed in the chapters above and show that *BBC Sherlock*'s titular detective is a close adaptation of the iconic Victorian consulting detective, though he is still his own person with eccentricities that Holmes did not possess. At the beginning of the series, Sherlock was not as iconic as Holmes still is. By the end of season four, the young detective can live up to the iconicity of his Victorian namesake and will go down in history as a generation defining Sherlock Holmes, the world's only consulting detective.

Bibliography

Adams, James Eli. *Dandies and Desert Saints Styles of Victorian Masculinity.* Cornell University Press, 1995.

Beirne, Rebecca C. "Extraordinary minds, impossible choices: mental health, special skills and television." *Med Humanities*, vol. 45, 2018, pp. 235-239.

Brooks, Peter. "The Melodramatic Imagination." *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. Colombia University Press, 1984, pp. 1-23.

Butler, Stephen & Agnieszka Sienkiewicz-Charlish. "More than Guilty Pleasure: The Case of Crime Fiction." *Crime Fiction: A Critical Casebook*, edited by Stephen Butler & Agnieszka Sienkiewicz-Charlish, Peter Lang, 2018, pp. 9-11.

Castelow, Ellen. "Opium in Victorian Britain." *Historic UK*, https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Opium-in-Victorian-Britain/. Accessed 21 April 2020.

Cawelti, John G. "The Evolution of Social Melodrama." *Imitations of Life: A Reader on Film and Television Melodrama*, edited by Marcia Landy, Wayne State University Press, 1991, pp. 33-49.

Doyle, Arthur Conan. *Memories and Adventures*. 1924. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

---. *The Complete Stories of Sherlock Holmes*. Wordsworth Editions, 2007.

Eder, Jens, Fotis Jannadis & Ralf Schneider. "Characters in Fictional Worlds: An Introduction." *Characters in the Fictional Worlds: Understanding Imaginary Beings in Literature, Film, and Other Media,* edited by Jens Eder, Fotis Jannadis & Ralf Schneider, De Gruyter, 2010, pp. 3-64.

Faye, Lyndsay. “Prologue: Why Sherlock? Narrator Investment in the BBC Series.” *Sherlock and the Transmedia Fandom: Essays on the BBC Series.* Edited by Louisa Ellen Stein & Kristina Busse, McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2012, pp. 1-8.

Freeman, Sonya. “The Autistic Detective: Sherlock Holmes and his Legacy.” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2014, https://dsq-sds.org/article/view/3728/3791. Accessed 18 May 2020.

Garside, Emily. “Modernizing Holmes: Location and Bringing Sherlock into the Twenty-First Century.” *Sherlock Holmes in Context.* Edited by Sam Naidu. Palgrave MacMillan Limited, 2017, pp. 187-198.

Gatiss, Mark and Stephen Moffat, creators. *Sherlock*. Hartswood Films and BBC Wales, 2010.

Gatiss, Mark and Stephen Moffat, creators. *Sherlock*. Hartswood Films and BBC Wales, 2014.

Gatiss, Mark and Stephen Moffat, creators. *Sherlock*. Hartswood Films and BBC Wales, 2017.

Gilmour, Robin. *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*. George Allen & Unwin, 1981.

Hill, Reginald. “Holmes: The Hamlet of Crime Fiction.” *Crime Writers,* British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978, pp. 20-41.

“Homosocial.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*, https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/view/Entry/57091781?redirectedFrom=homosocial#eid. Accessed on April 29 2020.

Hutcheon, Linda and Siobhan O’Flynn. *A Theory of Adaptation: Second Edition,* Routledge, 2013.

Joyce, Stephen. “Authentic in Authenticity: The Evolution of Sherlock Holmes on Screen.” *Journal of Popular Film and Television,* vol. 45, no. 2, 2017, pp. 79-89.

Kline, Karen. "*The Accidental Tourist* On Page and On Screen: Interrogating Normative Theories About Film Adaptation." *Literature/Film Quarterly,* vol. 24, no. 1, 1996, pp. 70-83.

Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth & David Kessler. "The Five Stages of Grief." *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss.* Scribner, 2005, pp. 7–29.

Landy, Marcia. "Introduction." *Imitations of Life: a Reader on Film and Television Melodrama,* edited by Marcia Landy, Wayne State University Press, 1991, pp. 13-30.

McClellan, Ann. ""All that Matters is the Work": Text and Adaptation in Sherlock." *Sherlock Holmes in Context.* Edited by Sam Naidu. Palgrave MacMillan Limited, 2017, pp. 7-34.

Menes, Bonnie. "Sociology and Sherlock Holmes." *The American Scholar,* vol. 50, no. 1, 1981, pp. 101-105.

"Mercurial." *The Oxford English Dictionary,* https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2443/view/Entry/116691?redirectedFrom=mercurial#eid. Accessed April 29 2020.

Orel, Harold. "Sherlock Holmes and His Creator: A Case of Mistaken Identity." *Colby Quarterly,* vol. 31, no. 3, 1995, pp. 169-178.

Pavett, Mike. "Introduction: Before the Fiction." *Crime Writers,* British Broadcasting Corporation, 1978, pp. 8-19.

Polasek, Ashley D. "Surveying the Post-Millennial Sherlock Holmes: A Case for the Great Detective as a Man of Our Times." *Adaptation,* vol. 6, no. 3, 2013, pp. 384-393.

Ramday, Morna. "Chapter Three: Homosocial Symbiosis." *Man up: A Study of Gendered Expectations of Masculinities at the Fin De Siècle*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015, pp. 68-87.

Redmond, Christopher. *A Sherlock Holmes Handbook*. Dundurn, 1993.

Rosendo, Nieves. "*Sherlock*: Adaptation and Transmedial Narrative." *Artnodes,* vol. 18, 2016, pp.21-26.

"Sherlock - His Last Vow Commentary." *Youtube,* uploaded by JohnCartney, 1 August 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y51PznebWdQ&t=1680s.

"Sherlock - The Empty Hearse Commentary." *Youtube,* uploaded by JohnCartney, 2 September 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bsCva3MITwk&t=4210s.

Small, Douglas. "Sherlock Holmes and Cocaine: A 7% Solution for Modern Professionalism." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920,* vol 58, no. 3, 2015, pp. 341-360.

Smith, James L. "The Nature of Melodrama." *Melodrama.* 1973. Routledge, 2018, pp. 1-15.

Westlake, Mike. 'Television: The Classic TV Detective Genre." *Framework,* vol. 0, no. 13, 1980, pp. 37-38.

Zarzosa, Agustin. "Diagnosing Suffering." *Refiguring Melodrama in Film and Television: Captive Affects, Elastic Sufferings, Vicarious Objects,* Lexington Books, 2013, pp. 47-66.

Ziskund, Eugene, Karl Syndulko & Irving Maltzman. "Aversive Conditioning in the Sociopath." *The Pavlovian Journal of Biological Science: Official Journal of the Pavlovian,* vol. 13, no. 4, 1978, pp. 199-205.