From automaton to superman: the evolution of Sherlock Holmes in Springer's Enola Holmes and its film adaptation

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From automaton to superman: the evolution of Sherlock Holmes in Springer's *Enola Holmes* and its film adaptation

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Introduction

In June 2020, Nancy Springer, writer of the spinoff book series *Enola Holmes* and the various producers of its film adaptation faced a lawsuit instigated by the Conan Doyle Estate. The estate argued that the depiction of Sherlock Holmes as showing "human connection and empathy" (U.S. District Court, 6) corresponded with the character as depicted by Doyle in his last short stories only. The latter being still copyrighted, the estate made a case for copyright infringement which was ultimately denied by the court. If a slight change in Holmes' character is indeed visible within Doyle's canon, what is remarkable concerning *Enola Holmes* is the much more notable gap between the detective depicted by Doyle and the Sherlock Holmes played by Henry Cavill in the movie, who has especially drifted far from the former in the way he shows emotions. This shift, originating in Springer's novels, is the result of an evolution in the three works' historical contexts.

During my research, four major contexts for study emerged, namely the work of adaptation, feminism, the evolution of emotions and our relation to them, and finally the implicit meanings contained in the generic structure of detective fiction. The proposed theoretical framework addresses these important themes. This will be followed by an analysis of the reasons behind the success of the original *Sherlock Holmes* stories resulting in the mythical quality of their main protagonist. I will subsequently show how Springer contributed to keep this myth alive while giving it a modern twist, and will at last argue that the movie attempted to re-invent the myth. In the course of this thesis, I am indebted to the following definition of myth, as given by the Oxford English Dictionary: "A person or thing held in awe or generally referred

to with near reverential admiration on the basis of popularly repeated stories (whether real or fictitious)" ("myth", 2.b.).

The analysis aims at comparing three works, that is, the original Holmes stories, Springer's *Enola Holmes* novels, and the latter's homonymous film adaptation[1]. It will therefore follow a congruent structure, with a first sub-part about the historical context and the reasons behind the work's success, and a second about the character of Sherlock Holmes specifically, trying to understand what the writer/director tried to achieve. Regarding Springer and the movie's director Harry Bradbeer (who is, as we will see, not the movie's only creator), my aim is to get a closer look at their work of adaptation and more specifically to understand the reasons behind the author or director's choices when modifying a pre-existing character.

Concerning Doyle's character, my analysis will rely on various existing critics such as those presented in *The Cambridge Companion to Sherlock Holmes*[2]. Springer's hexalogy is fairly recent (2006-2010), and the consequent dearth of scholarly criticism has led me to rely on my own close reading of the text and, where necessary, to both interviews of the author and readers' critique in order to bridge that gap. A similar method was applied for the movie.

My choice of *Enola Holmes* stems from my desire to bring something new to the field while analysing a universe I have been fond of since my childhood. The decision to focus on the character of Sherlock Holmes was inspired by the movie, where the

[1] Abbreviated in EH
[2] Abbreviated as CCSH

famous detective struck me as so different from the one created by Springer, and therefore all the more different from Doyle's.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Adaptations and spin-offs

What is an adaptation?

As Linda Hutcheon remarks in *Theory of Adaptation*, no literary work comes out of nowhere. In other words, every text can be read through its palimpsestic elements. For a work to be considered an adaptation however, the resemblance must be acknowledged. Most of the time the title alone is a clue: *Carmen Jones* is an obvious adaptation of Georges Bizet's opera *Carmen*, itself based on Prosper Mérimée's novel. But even in *Carmen*'s case, the latest adaptation can diverge significantly from its original and the term "adaptation" can thus be questioned: to what degree of modification can a work of art still be considered an adaptation? Is the author's acknowledgment of his work as an adaptation enough for it to be considered as such?

Adaptation often implies a change of medium: many will think of movie adaptations of novels, which are by far the most prominent. Yet, it is not always the case: for example, Hutcheon considers *Carmen: a hip-hopera* to be "as much an adaptation of *Carmen Jones*[3] as of *Carmen*[4]."(163). A movie can therefore be an adaptation of another movie, or a book of another book.

[3] Preminger's movie (1954)
[4] Bizet's opera (1875)

Consequently, neither the name nor the change of medium is enough to characterize a work as an adaptation. There must be resemblances in the storylines, which often means keeping at least some of its characters' names and/or particularities, as well as some of the important themes of the story. This is what Robert Stam calls the "heart of the artichoke", or the "core" (57) which is transferable from the adapted text to its adaptation. He then argues that no such thing exists, as all texts are subject to the interpretation of the reader. Although it is true that everyone will read a text in their own way and therefore will have different understandings of what the important themes or the "aura" of the work consists in, the main elements of a story are often graspable through objective features.

If we examine a widely adapted canon or text such as the *Sherlock Holmes* stories or *Carmen*, we can identify elements which are present in almost every adaptation: in Sherlock Holmes' case, the characters are Sherlock and Watson, and the storyline involves some detective work. In *Carmen*, the eponymous character is central, and some form of love story is involved, often accompanied by mentions of the criminal world. These core values are the necessary basis for a work to be understood as an adaptation rather than an independent production. For some other works, it may be a little more delicate to identify, although the sheer number of mentions of a theme or character is often enough to identify it as a core element in any story.

In other works, the absence (or small number) of adaptations makes a consensus about the core values difficult to identify. In that case, the only way to qualify as an adaptation would be the number of similarities between the adapted work and its

source. Which themes or values constitute the core will be decided both by its creator and by its reception.

For example, imagine an adaptation of the Harry Potter books which would exclude the theme of magic and magical powers. To most people, this would deprive the story of one of its central themes and would therefore hardly qualify as an adaptation of Harry Potter, no matter how similar the rest of the story is.

What Hutcheon calls the "aura" (4), thereby re-defining Walter Benjamin's concept, is something a little more subtle. If to Benjamin the aura is something that cannot be copied (229) and would therefore be lost in the case of a play adapted for the camera, Hutcheon argues that some adaptations "carry that aura with them" (4). In this case, the aura is what Neil McCaw calls the "essence or spirit" of a work (CCSH, 202), that is to say the elements judged by the adapter as important to keep from the adapted text because they confer a certain atmosphere to the work. They differ from the core values in that they are not essential in the understanding of the adaptation as such.

For example, in *Wuthering Heights*, Heathcliff's dark skin colour plays an important role in the way others treat him: von Sneidern argues that "Heathcliff's racial otherness cannot be a matter of dispute; Brontë makes that explicit" (172). However, this is not shown in the 1970 Robert Fuest movie, where Heathcliff is simply shown as a white boy with a skin covered with dirt. In this case, some could argue that a part of the aura surrounding the character of Heathcliff has been omitted. The work is nonetheless clearly an adaptation, keeping most of the plotline and characters.

Why adapt?

When reading about the plethora of adaptations of certain works centred on a character such as Carmen, Batman or Sherlock Holmes, one can wonder where the urge to re-use an existing character comes from. Of course, an obvious reason would be to transpose the story into today's world, such as the BBC's series *Sherlock*. But this cannot be the only motivation: otherwise, how would we explain Guy Ritchie's movie *Sherlock Holmes*, set in Victorian London but with a radically different interpretation of the characters?

According to Hutcheon, the success of adaptations is explained by the inherent attractive aspect of re-watching something we already know to which some new elements are added. This echoes with Aristotle's theory about art, in which he states that the concept of imitation is part of the instinctive behaviour of human beings, and is the source of our pleasure in art (IV). Many forms of art are indeed a mere rendition of our environment and interactions.[5]

With this idea in mind, what could be more natural than to adapt stories with which we already are familiar and alter a few of their elements? In *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things* (1962), the art historian George Kubler defines the "antipodes of the human experience of time" as "exact repetition, which is onerous, and unfettered variation, which is chaotic" (63). Adaptations could be described as something in between those two antipodes, presenting the audience or reader with familiar elements without being a complete repetition. In Ritchie's movie, for example,

[5] With the exception of modern/abstract art (ex. Mondrian)

we can observe a clear emphasis on the original bitterness shown by Sherlock Holmes when he declares: "the good Watson had at that time deserted me for a wife, the only selfish action which I can recall in our association. I was alone." (*The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier*, 1000). This has been developed as a central theme to the movie, with Holmes trying to prevent Watson from marrying. Moreover, the change of medium allowed the development of action scenes which were almost always omitted in the original work, although it is made clear that Holmes is good at fighting.

The change of medium is thus an important motivation for the creation of adaptations based on the medium's own specificities. For example in a detective movie, something important can be hinted or suggested very discreetly (e.g., an object in the background). The process is more difficult in a novel, where the reader can come back to a previous chapter or paragraph with much more ease.

But how does one keep the "aura" of a work when the medium presents completely different restrictions? Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes* movie is praised by some reviewers for its modern twist, yet many fans of the original Doyle's canon are critical of the way Holmes and Watson are depicted:

> (…) as for the characters that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle created, these two might well have had different names all together. They certainly are one antagonistic pair of roommates. (…) Downey makes Holmes an action figure and only in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, the second of the Rathbone series was Holmes ever this much of a macho dude. It might be fun for fans, but I like my Holmes as cerebral as Conan Doyle wrote him." (Bkoganbing)

In other words, for this amateur critic, the aura of the original work has not been kept. If Hutcheon remarks that "a negative view of adaptation might simply be the product of thwarted expectations on the part of a fan desiring fidelity to a beloved adapted text" (4), she also argues that fidelity is not everything. Indeed, the aura of a work can be preserved in an adaptation even when many elements differ from the original work. In this case, for the reviewer, the cerebral aspect of the character of Sherlock Holmes seems to be an important feature. We might thus infer that the BBC's series would be somewhat of a better match for him/her.

The commercial success of Ritchie's movie is nonetheless echoing with Hutcheon's argument stating that "Perhaps one way to think about unsuccessful adaptations is not in terms of infidelity to a prior text, but in terms of a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one's own and thus autonomous." (20-21). Especially in the case of Sherlock Holmes, for which the adaptations are countless, the creativity factor is important: except perhaps for the most passionate fans, we can imagine that the number of people interested in watching another exact rendition of the Sherlock Holmes stories is not as high as it used to be.

Spinoffs

In the case of a work with countless adaptations, spinoffs are a way to achieve a certain freedom in the creation of the storyline. In her book *Literary Spinoffs*, Birgit Spengler defines them as such:

> As applied in the following, the term "spinoff" describes fictional texts that take their cues from famous, and often canonical, works of literature, which they revise, rewrite, adapt or appropriate as a whole or in parts, thus producing alternative voices and/or historical or geographical re-locations for texts that are generally well known to contemporary audiences—be it because of their status as cultural classics and long-term readers' favourites, or because of their medial presence in cinema or tv versions. (11)

Typically, a spinoff will be set in the same fictional universe as the original work but will focus on another character. Just as Spengler sets out in her book, I choose not to count prequels and sequels as spinoffs. The key here is in the concept of rewriting, and of providing an "alternative voice": a prequel or sequel does not aim at providing an alternative voice or to re-write the story, but rather to work as continuation or explanation of the original plot.

In Nancy Springer's case, *Enola Holmes* provides us with a feminine spinoff within the Holmes universe. As Spengler remarks, the reader will therefore experience what she calls an "oscillation" (36) between Springer's story and their knowledge of the Holmes canon, which consists in this case of the original work, but might also include adaptations. For example, one might have the original stories in mind as reference but imagine Sherlock Holmes to look like the BBC's series actor Benedict Cumberbatch.

A particularity of Doyle's original *Sherlock Holmes* stories is that although many elements are fictional, the stories take place in a realistic Victorian and Edwardian London, with the corresponding technologies and events such as World War I. In a sense, the environment in which *Enola Holmes* takes place is extended beyond Doyle's original work, rendering it both difficult and easy for the author: if any historical mistake will be pointed out by specialists, the universe is already existing and does not demand an extensive work of re-creation besides its feministic hindsight.

1.2. Feminism

In a 2010 interview, Nancy Springer describes herself as a feminist (Bookyurt). Bradbeer's movie has also been considered as feminist (Moloney). Although most people are familiar with the term "feminist", its definition varies from one person to the other. The Oxford English Dictionary gives "Advocacy of equality of the sexes and the establishment of the political, social, and economic rights of the female sex; the movement associated with this". There has been a variety of periods of activism throughout history, all of them focused on different goals. Those periods, commonly associated with certain beliefs, are usually referred to as "waves". Since a movement rarely has a defined beginning and end date, the lack of consensus among scholars as to the exact day or year of the beginning of a new wave is understandable. However, the confusion goes further: for example, Ellen Riordan defines postfeminism as the belief that "women have achieved equality and need to "move on" from their victim status." (296). She does however note that what some authors call postfeminism is simply another form of feminism, often associated with the third-wave.

Therefore, I would like to give a brief explanation of the differences between all the "waves"[6] as well as the period in which they occurred. I will come back to the way this evolution translates to both Springer's and Bradbeer's work respectively in part III and IV.

The first wave: women's suffrage

The historian Marlene LeGates situates the beginning of the first wave around the middle of the 19th century, between the years 1850 and 1860 (197). That is not to say that feminism did not exist before that, but those decades saw the emergence of an organised feminist movement with a lasting influence on the political and social organisation of Western countries. Although different in every country, this movement was characterized by a rather "practical" goal, which was to achieve a legal status for women equal to that of men. LeGates points out that although most activists were aiming at defending the rights of all women, this movement mainly consisted of white middle-class women:

> Claiming to speak for all women, feminist reformers shared the conviction that as beneficiaries of a superior civilization, they had the moral responsibility to share its values with, or impose them on, those whom they considered their inferiors, be they Native North American women on reservations or natives in colonies, or women in working-class and immigrant neighborhoods. Those who were convinced of irreconcilable class tensions and the impossibility of

[6] With an exception for the fourth wave, which is too recent for me to comment upon and not relevant in the context of this study

> reforming society were attracted instead to socialist movements that forecast revolution; they generally kept their distance from organized feminism (199-200).

The priority was to allow women to gain full control on their lives and no longer be dependent on a father, brother or husband to achieve any legal or social status. A relatively clear indicator of the progress of women's right in each country is the year in which women were granted suffrage, which is considered one of the main goals of this first wave.

As LeGates remarks, the movement for women's suffrage was composed of "unstable alliances of very different groups" (282), who went their separate ways after suffrage was granted. The aftermath of World War I also saw the rise of a rather conservative backlash, unfavourable to any further advancements of those now scattered feminist organisations, which nevertheless continued their actions in the search for equality.

Second wave: Equal pay and the female body

After World War II, women progressively started to organize again and gained more visibility. The post-war period saw the emergence of what would later be called the second wave. Works such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) or Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) were milestones in the feminist landscape, helping thousands of women to reconsider their role in society.

As the scholar Nasrullah Mambrol points out, "while the struggle for the vote remained the symbolic centre of first wave feminism, arguably for second wave feminists the key site of struggle was the female body itself – its representation and the meanings attached to the bald fact of biological difference."

Second-wave feminists were thus focused on the representation of women in society as well as the various taboos surrounding their sexuality. This included fighting for equal treatment in the workplace, for the independence of wives from their husbands (legally as well as socially), or for the right to have an abortion. Although they were aiming at a more inclusive feminism, white middle-class activists were still at the forefront of the movement, which would later be criticized by the following generation.

Feminism once again faced conservative backlash in the media during the 1980s with the Reagan-Thatcher era, and some second-wave activists were taken as an example and turned into the myth of the unhappy and bitter "bra-burning" feminist (LeGates, 327; Henry, 110). That is not to say that the movement disappeared, but it was massively undermined by the government both in the UK and the US, opposing feminists to the traditional ideal of the happy housewife. The various attempts of Ronald Reagan to go back to a more conservative legislation (Coste) as well as the expansion of feminism to other social classes and other ethnicities[7] can be seen as contributions in the emergence of the third wave.

[7] I think here of the best-seller *Ain't I a Woman*? *Black women and feminism* by Bell Hooks (1981)

The third wave: intersectionality and inclusivity

Third-wave feminism originated in the 1990s (Riordan). However, what differentiated the third wave from the second was not only a generational reaction, as Astrid Henry remarks:

> This latter term, the "third wave," has frequently been employed as a kind of shorthand for a generational difference among feminists, one based on chronological age. Yet, as I argue, the term must also be seen as representing the desire of those who embrace it to signal a "new" feminism that is distinct from the second wave. (3)

And indeed: third-wave feminism focused on inclusivity, as a reaction to the second-wave's tendency to consider women as a group of similar individuals. The third wave claims to be more nuanced, involving the struggle for the rights of women of colour, LGBTQ+ women or women from developing countries in their preoccupations, but also including what Riordan refers to as the "girl power", that is to say girls embracing their femininity and the societal codes associated with it (wearing heels, make-up, etc).

Although Riordan argues that this latter kind of feminism is very different and undermines the message of other movements which she considers to be quite central to the third wave (such as "Riot grrrl"), the self-proclaimed inclusivity of this generation inherently results in the idea that there is not one feminism but many feminisms. As Astrid puts it, "Feminism thus becomes an ideology of individual empowerment to make choices, no matter what those choices are." In other words, "girlie" girls are just as valid as punks rebelling against societal gender norms.

What is particularly interesting in the case of *Enola Holmes* is that it can be understood through the lens of those three waves. Indeed, the story takes place in late nineteenth-century London, and Enola's mother is a suffragist. The author herself seems to be of the generation of second-wave feminism (although she does not claim to belong to any of those waves) and the movie presents us with various elements which can be understood as part of third-wave feminism.

If we analyse the way women were depicted in Doyle's original tales, we can see that they were considered as intellectually inferior to men. This idea, which will be discussed more thoroughly in 2.1, will serve as basis for Springer's eponymous character, a fourteen-year-old girl outsmarting Sherlock Holmes. She is indeed aided by the misogynistic underestimation of women's capacity to reason visible in the original stories. An example of this underestimation can be seen in "The Adventure of a Second Stain", when Holmes declares:

> And yet the motives of women are so inscrutable. You remember the woman at Margate whom I suspected for the same reason. No powder on her nose - that proved to be the correct solution. How can you build on such a quicksand? Their most trivial action may mean volumes, or their most extraordinary conduct may depend upon a hairpin or a curling-tongs. (657)

The key here is the idea that the world of women is considered as utterly irrational, and therefore impossible to understand for Sherlock Holmes. Springer has developed this aspect into the idea that the world of women is simply different, countering the negatively loaded idea of the "quicksand" evoked by Holmes. In the movie however, there is much more emphasis on women transcending the gender roles. For example, Enola has learned how to fight and she is better at it than her male counterpart.

The evolution of our conception of gender roles could thus be understood through the lens of those three works: Going from an alleged intellectual superiority of men over women to an equal consideration of women's intellectual abilities within gender-defined roles, to end up in a systematic positive depiction of the transgression of those roles. This evolution is also visible in the way emotions are understood in our modern era, moving from the idea of emotional conduct associated with women and rational thinking with men.

1.3. Emotions: an evolution

The interest in emotions and the way humans and societies deal with them has undergone profound changes between the nineteenth century and the present era. In order to understand the evolution of Sherlock Holme's character towards a more emotional being, I have looked into the way emotions were understood during the Victorian era as opposed to now.

In the introduction to *Emotions in Late Modernity*, Patulny and Olson tell us that "Into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (…) the reinforcement of manners and emotions increasingly became the responsibility of the *individual*, rather than an external Other (or God)." (12) The control over one's emotions was thus deemed important. Towards the end of Doyle's century, the progress in science and psychology pathed the way for a more neurologically accurate understanding of emotions.

However, emotions were still very much understood through the lens of gender-based differences: "it was commonly held that women were *naturally* more emotional than men, a notion that still persists – albeit in a much more relaxed form – today." (Lively, 69). This was partly due to the division of labour at the time, with women expecting to be "tending to the emotional needs of their children and creating a *safe haven* for their husbands" who worked to provide an income to the family (ibid.). I must nuance this argument by saying that the "housewife" model mostly applied to middle- and upper-class women: among the lower classes, women had already been working for a long time. But even in that case, they were still expected to attend to the household chores and raise children, a task they were believed to be naturally good at (K. Hughes). An 1842 book, written by a woman and titled *The Daughters of England: Their Position in Society, Character and Responsibilities*, declares women to be inferior to men "in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength" (Ellis, 8). The author later condones this view by describing (middle-class) women's position as an advantage, freeing them from:

> . . . that fierce conflict of worldly interests, by which men are so deeply occupied as to be in a manner compelled to stifle their best feelings, until they become in reality the characters they at first only assumed. (14)

This passage suggests that a majority of people during the Victorian era did not believe men to not experience emotions, but rather that emotions were standing in the way of a proper reasoning and should be controlled. This is corroborated by Begiato, who explains that one of the key elements of masculinity in the Victorian era was considered to be the mastering of one's emotions (46). Emotions in women, on the other hand, were considered more natural, as shown in an 1897 periodical article about the physical manifestation of emotions. Indeed, crying (arguably one of the strongest displays of emotion) is discussed in both children and women, advising to keep a certain restraint, but nothing is said about men, as if they were not experiencing it (Nature, 304).

Another important idea characteristic of the Victorian era is the opposition between emotions and rationality, between feelings and logic. Indeed, "Nineteenth-century European women argued firstly that their emotions led to better judgements in some areas of social life, such as around families and households, and later rejected such claims of emotionality altogether to argue that they were similarly reasonable and rational as men" (Barclay and Crozier-de-Rosa, 188). Both of those behaviours indicate an underlying consideration of the emotions as opposed to rational reasoning.

This is visible in Doyle's work, where emotions are described as "grit in a sensitive instrument" for Sherlock Holmes (*Scandal in Bohemia*, 162), arguing that they would distract him from his detective work. The metaphor, indirectly comparing Holmes with an instrument is an interesting indicator of Doyle's attempt to present detective work as something that can be achieved through a purely logical (and therefore scientifically measurable) thinking. Holmes even declares that "emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning." (*The Sign of the Four*, 96). As Patulny and Olson describe, this rather binary vision has progressively evolved towards something more nuanced today:

> A critical inversion has been the realisation of the interrelatedness of – rather than opposition between – emotion and reasoning. Illouz (2018) writes of the centrality of reasoning and rationality, especially through consumption, to intimate emotional pursuits. Research from neuroscience (Damasio 1994; Davidson 2012; Feldman-Barrett 2017) shows that brain processes surrounding emotion and reason are intimately connected, and that emotions motivate and 'tag' cognitions. (14)

And it is this evolution that has shaped the way Western societies understand emotions today. Patulny and Olson describe five major features characterising these changes:

1- *Emotions are more complex*.[8] Conceptualisations have moved beyond dualistic notions of emotion and reason, to acknowledge the centrality of emotional motivations and awareness to reasoning. (…)
2- *Emotions are viewed as more individualistic.* (…)
3- *Emotion and consumption are intertwined* more intimately now than at any other point in history.
4- Instead of religious texts or etiquette books, *emotions are now mediated through mass media and interactive social media digital platforms.*
5- *Emotions in this context require continuous reflexive monitoring, feedback and management.* (14)

I would add to this that emotions are no longer viewed through a binary gender-based lens as they were in Doyle's time, but are instead recognized as occurring in men as well as women (Lively, 73). The emergence of hashtags such as #realmencry on social media can be seen as an attempt to normalize certain emotional behaviours in men which were condemned in the past.

Except for the number 4, all of the aforementioned aspects can be read as a background in order to understand the evolution of emotions in the character of Sherlock Holmes throughout those three works and especially between Doyle and Springer's canons, separated by more than a century characterized by profound changes in the understanding of emotions.

[8] Patulny and Olsen are here implying a more complex *understanding* of emotions rather than emotions being more complex in themselves.

But the understanding of emotions was not the only major change between Doyle's time and the 2000's. I believe that, every book or movie being the product of its time as well as shaping it, the artistic context has a major influence on the choices made by the author. If both Springer's book and the movie show an attempt to modernize a mythical figure, the creation of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes was part of the process of establishing and formalizing a new genre. Indeed, the middle of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of detective fiction as we know it today, a genre which Doyle undoubtedly contributed to shape and which influenced both Springer and Bradbeer.

1.4. The birth of detective fiction

The mid-nineteenth century saw the growth of organised police forces such as Scotland Yard, in which the creation of a detective department in 1842 (Griffin, ii), is intrinsically linked to the birth and evolution of detective fiction. If we look at earlier crime writing, the *Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction* reports that

> Eighteenth-century commentators were describing a world they saw as replete with rogues and desperadoes of all kinds, a world without detectives, without even much of a police force, without reliable insurance companies or other mechanisms of personal protection, and with an inefficient and often flagrantly corrupt court and prison system. (Bell, 9)

If detectives in the broad sense of the term existed before 1842, they were mostly isolated cases such as the famous ex-criminal Eugène François Vidocq (1775-1857) who

is considered by many as the first private detective in history (Morton). Vidocq subsequently inspired the character of Lecoq in one of the first detective novels: *L'affaire Lerouge* (1865). The character, created by Émile Gaboriau, became in turn one of Doyle's alleged inspirations for Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, although Doyle has his detective qualify Lecoq as a "miserable bungler" (*A Study in Scarlet*, 25) this "betrays an anxiety of influence rather than genuine disdain" (CCSH, 20). Holmes' methods are indeed very close to Lecoq's, and certain features such as a certain tendency for mystery and dramatic reveals can be observed in both, although to different extents.

Gaboriau's protagonist seem to derive from the eighteenth-century influence of the lawless police agent. But it is another author, Edgar Allan Poe, who came up with significant innovations in the genre despite his work predating Gaboriau's. Indeed, Harpham tells us that:

> In 1841, in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Edgar Allan Poe inaugurated the modern era of detective fiction and with it a new kind of detective. In this genre, detectives were for the most part wellborn and intellectual, and had no criminal past. (121)

This figure of the righteous detective acting in citizens' interest is linked to an important societal change. The birth of police detectives during the second half of the nineteenth century as well as the scientific methods applied to crime such as forensics, thereby increasing efficiency (Griffin, 141-148) caused a spark of interest in the public for crime-related police work ("Latest Intelligence", "Police Intelligence"). Citizens were no longer left to fend for themselves and an increasing trust in the newly

centralized police force was observed (ibid., 253), laying the foundations for the popularity of the literary genre.

However, we should not forget that the process of gaining the public's trust was a slow one. By the 1880s, the efficiency of the police was still questioned by many a newspaper in London such as the *Star* or the *Pall Mall Gazette* (Clarke, *CCSH* 32). This is reflected in the fact that both Poe and Doyle made the police in their stories quite inefficient. The detective is thus an outsider acting for the greater good and reassuring the reader, but also outsmarting official detectives, which can be read as an attempt to reach a larger audience including those worried about the police's efficiency.

This societal change thus progressively gave birth to a new literary genre characterised by a structure and purpose differing from 18th century crime fiction. As Bells puts it,

> though often comic, [18th century crime fiction] is not reassuring in intent but intrinsically contentious, willing to confront and disquiet rather than to comfort like the predominantly recreational detective fiction of later centuries (8).

And this is visible through a change in the very structure of the narrative: instead of a first-person narrative focused on the criminal himself such as in Daniel Defoe's novel *Roxana* (1724), 19th century whodunit typically begins with a third party narrating the discovery of a body either by the authorities or by a detective collaborating with them.

In his *Poetics of Prose* (1971), Todorov provides us with an analysis of the general pattern of the whodunit. In this pattern, the narration unfolds at a double pace: there is the story of the crime, and the story of its resolution. They both happen on a different

level. First, the story of the crime is characterised by its absence and its backwards character, going from the effect to discover the cause. This often results in a revelation towards the end of the book. Second[9], the story of its resolution is a more linear one, where realistic elements are generally appreciated in order to anchor the story in the real world. Contrarily to gothic literature, the goal is not an oscillation between supernatural and reality, but rather a progressive evolution from the former towards the latter, provided by a rational explanation.[10]

The *Sherlock Holmes* collection contributed to develop this pattern, since every single one of the stories are based on this model. We can see that in Gaboriau's work, the second story is not always as linear: he uses a lot more flashbacks (mostly used to describe the different characters' pasts and backgrounds) than Doyle, who only uses flashbacks in the unfolding of the first story.

Todorov argues that, the detective fiction being part of mass literature, a good story is characterized by its conformity to the genre. And it is this genre's very basis that Doyle and Poe helped to create, showing that this linear second story worked well with the readers.

Some of the rules described by Todorov are not always corresponding to Doyle's stories, for example the rule number 2 in the S.S. van Dine list, according to which the criminal should never be a professional, which contradicts the existence of characters such as Charles Augustus Milverton, Colonel Moran or Professor Moriarty.

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[9] For reasons of conciseness, I will call the story of the crime "first story" and the story of its resolution "second story" from here on.

[10] This is only true for the "classic" whodunit. The antithesis of this irrational→rational pattern would be authors such as Douglas Adams with his *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*.

However, one can notice a significant correspondence between many of those rules and the *Sherlock Holmes* canon, such as the prevalence of rational explanations (however fantastical the original mystery may sound), or the relative immunity of the detective. Doyle's unsuccessful attempt to kill his detective is to me a proof that this immunity was of importance to his public.

If Todorov's rules can be useful in order to understand the way detective fiction works, the fact that they do not always apply to Doyle's stories (among others) is an indication that they should be taken as guidelines rather than an absolute norm. This thesis is aimed at comparing three different works based on the same universe. Therefore, instead of using an external set of rules to compare their structure, I found it more relevant to base my comparison on an analysis of Doyle's stories. To this end, I have endeavoured to come up with a list of rules which goal is to define a certain pattern common to all the stories in the Sherlock Holmes original canon.

Firstly, the plot is set out in "real life", giving a realistic context for the story. Secondly, the narrator is a generic person to whom the reader can relate. Although he is intradiegetic,[11] very few details are revealed about his personal life. Thirdly, the structure of the second story is linear and does not contain flash-backs. Fourthly, we are not fearing for the detective's life and safety. Even in *The Final Problem*, Holmes' death is already acknowledged at the beginning of the story. At last, there is what I call the "mystery effect": the first story contains at least one bizarre element in its initial exposition phase, which is in most cases only revealed at the end of the narrative. In some stories, the mysterious element is discovered earlier, but the stories always end

[11] Except for *His Last Bow*

on a revelation concerning the first story, often about the way Holmes came to the conclusion. For example in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", the reader is unaware of the presence of the snake until it appears (the initial bizarre element). Holmes' explanation at the very end of the story allows for suspense to be maintained until after the climax.

Clare Clarkes describes different rules, allegedly "self-imposed by Doyle" (CCSH, 34). However, they do not apply to all Holmes stories, which is why I have not included them in my list. The rules are indeed presented as follows:

-*The criminal should not be heroic*. There are several exceptions to this rule throughout the Holmes canon. The sailor in "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange" refusing to flee without her lover after killing her violent husband is to me presented as heroic. Holmes' decision to say nothing to the police shows Doyle's intent for the reader to empathise with the criminal. Jonathan Small in *the Sign of the Four* can also be described in heroic terms considering his loyalty to his old companions.

-*The number of legally punishable crimes should be kept to a minimum*. The existence of characters such as Pr Moriarty, Don Murillo in "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge" or Spaulding in "The Red-Headed League" who all have a rather extended criminal record contradict this rule.

-*Sensationalism should be suppressed*. This rule is a little more difficult to define if we consider that sensationalism can have different definitions, and what is sensational for

one reader is unexceptional for another. If Doyle's stories present nothing of the melodrama evoked in W. Hughes' definition (5-15), both her and Gabriele (2) agree on the common denominator of the shocking value characterising Victorian sensational literature. And although the *Sherlock Holmes* stories present the reader with fewer shocking elements than most of the works evoked by W. Hughes in her book[12], those elements are nonetheless present in many a story. They are more than once supported by a dramatic reveal, such as the opening of the coffin in "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax", or the confronting of criminals such as the old man in "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman", to name a few. If we look further in W. Hughes' definition, we find the idea of juxtaposition between realism and romance (16) which is to me clearly present in the Holmes canon, although the romance part has been relatively toned down. This balanced achieved by Doyle between realism and sensational crime fiction will be discussed further in the section about *The Strand*'s readership.

Insofar as the *Enola Holmes* canon is concerned, it is difficult to make it fit into one category or the other. Although it presents some elements of detective fiction through the various cases of disappearance solved by the heroine, the series presents us with a broad variety of themes. For example, Enola's story can be qualified as *Bildungsroman*, thriller or historical novel among other things.

[12] see page 106 for an example of what the author herself calls "a kind of distilled essence of sensationalism".

However, I found it quite interesting to notice that the *Enola Holmes* series is much closer to the three rules described above. Firstly, the criminals are never presented as heroic but rather as either mentally unstable (think of Alexander Finch in *The Case of the Left-handed Lady*, Flora in *The Case of the Bizarre Bouquets*) or products of the rigid class-based Victorian society. The latter is interesting since it presents both rich and poor as villains, be it Lady Cecily's relatives trying to marry her by force or Miss Culhane and her acolytes kidnapping rich citizens in order to make more money. Secondly, although crimes such as kidnapping or strangling are punishable by law, there is no actual murder in Springer's stories. If some of the villains attempt to murder, they never actually reach their goal. At first glance, one could conclude that Springer's stories are less violent. However, I would argue that although the crimes committed are less violent in themselves, the fact that the reader is following the stories through the eyes of Enola makes certain events such as the garrotting of Lady Cecily in *The Case of the Left-Handed Lady* much more frightening. Indeed, the narrative shift to the first-person results in the destruction of the detective's immunity described above. As opposed to Sherlock Holmes, the reader worries about Enola's health and safety. Springer thus impressively manages to keep a certain scary atmosphere without having any character murdered throughout the series. The third rule is again up for discussion. Although presenting some sensational elements such as the whole scene between Flora and her sister in *The Case of the Bizarre Bouquet*, the absence of murder arguably reduces the shocking value. Moreover, the first-person narrative does not allow the "mystery effect" which enhances the sensationalistic effect in *Sherlock Holmes*.

In the movie however, things are again entirely different. Unlike the book it is based upon, the escaping of the Marquess of Basilwether is only the tip of the iceberg in a much more complex affair involving the murder of his father by his grandmother based on a divergence in political views. This does confer a different atmosphere to the movie. The criminal still is not heroic, but the number of legally punishable crimes is higher and sensationalism is arguably pushed much further than in the book series. One can think of the death of the "bowler-hat" villain facing camera, or the fact that Enola's mother is not involved in the pacifist suffragist movement as in the book, but rather becomes a suffragette whose goal is to conduct violent actions for her cause.

This evolution is interesting when compared to the way the character of Holmes is depicted. In the original, he is immune to injuries (except perhaps for mental exhaustion). In *Enola Holmes*, he ends up injured and is helped by his sister provided he does not jeopardize her freedom. In the movie, he does not partake in any of the action, only giving advice from afar.

In the following sections, I would like to analyse the various elements which contributed to the shaping of as a mythical character. To this aim, I will first examine the historical context of its popularity, followed by an analysis of the character himself. My goal is to show the evolution of Holmes as myth both in the context of Victorian London and as a reassuring yet peculiar figure which became the basis for so many adaptations.

2. Doyle's Sherlock Holmes: the foundation of the myth

2.1. The context: Holmes as a product of his time

The interest for science

At the time of *A Study in Scarlet*, London was marked by the growth of mass-production following the Industrial Revolution, granting more and more people access to books and newspapers. Clarke mentions the rise of literacy rates following the 1870 Education Act establishment of mandatory education for children between 5 and 12, which also contributed to the growth of mass literature and journalism (29).

This evolution was coupled to a change in the way society viewed science:

> In the 1830s the English word 'science' began to take on its modern meaning. Robert Southey commented in 1834 that 'the medical profession . . . was an art . . . before it became a science', implying that it had advanced from a practical skill to a systematic, theoretically informed body of knowledge. At the 1833 meeting of the British Association, William Whewell proposed the term 'scientist' for investigators who until then had been known as natural philosophers. In the nineteenth century 'science' came to signify the study of the natural and physical world. Until that time it had denoted any sort of knowledge or skill, including the 'science' of boxing. (Otis, i)

The phrase "systematic, theoretically informed body of knowledge" is key here. Indeed, if science itself had existed for centuries, the second half of the nineteenth century saw a growth of interest in what came to be called the "scientific method".

One of the pioneers of this idea was the French sociologist Auguste Comte (1789-1857), who developed a theory called positivism in which facts were at the basis of any scientific observation (Thurs, 317). And this growing interest in hard evidence as opposed to speculation is arguably what Doyle refers to with the phrase "scientific methods", a phrase he uses two times in the canon (*The Adventure of Black Peter*, 560 and *The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire*, 1039). Indeed, Holmes is famous for holding facts at a central place in his reasonings:

> "This is indeed a mystery," I remarked. "What do you imagine that it means?"
>
> "I have no data yet. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts." (A Scandal in Bohemia, 163)

This emphasis on facts is thus an example of the way Doyle was influenced by thinkers of his time. Data indeed shows us that the mentions of the term "scientific method" in magazines started to grow from the 1850s on (Thurs, 309). However, despite the growing popular interest – or perhaps because of it – a clear consensus regarding what this "method" actually consists in has not been reached. A quick look at modern publications on the subject confirms that this idea of one defined scientific method does not hold water in the scientific world (Cowles, 1).

Cranfield accordingly tells us that, Doyle not really excelling as a scientist, "references to science within the stories are thus piecemeal and sometimes contradictory. They emerge in different stories in different ways and establish heterogeneous, often contradictory meanings." (CCSH, 89) To this we may add that

Doyle embraced a medical career more to meet his mother's wishes than as the result of a passion for the profession (Doyle, 22). In other words, he was above all a writer, and his goal was to *appear* as scientific as possible in order to ride that wave of popularity. The actual scientific nature of Holmes' reasoning was of no importance as long as it remained credible in the eyes of the readers. Doyle seemed to be aware of that fact since he made Holmes criticize Watson for his "romanticized" accounts of his work, showing a certain irony towards his own work as a mass literature writer (90).

Doyle pushed this new interest for science and reasoning to the point of creating a detective who not only does not show emotions, but is seemingly disconnected from the empathy felt by Watson towards death. This is for example visible in *A Study in Scarlet* where Watson declares "I have seen death in many forms, but never has it appeared to me in a more fearsome aspect than in that dark grimy apartment, which looked out upon one of the main arteries of suburban London". Holmes does not seem to be particularly shocked and conducts a minute examination "while his eyes wore the same far-away expression" Watson had "already remarked upon" (29). This opposition helps rendering the character of Holmes extraordinary, a process which will be further analysed in 2.2.

London newspaper and the new periodical format

It is interesting to notice that the financial appeal, often at the core of an author's motivation when it comes to popular culture, is often criticized (Hutcheon, 31). It was nonetheless the principal motivator for Conan Doyle to write the *Sherlock Holmes*

stories. Indeed, as discussed earlier, the development of the police sector resulted in an significant expansion of detective fiction towards the end of the century. The enthusiasm was such that Doyle's first publication of *A Study in Scarlet* was delayed by his editor for a year due to the market being saturated.

Looking for a source of income and having read these cheap and popular detective stories such as the best-seller *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* by Fergus Hume, Doyle noticed that in many of them "the detective always seemed to get at his results either by some sort of a lucky chance or fluke, or else it was quite unexplained how he got there" (CCSH 13). Inspired by his fellow writers, but also by his now famous professor Dr Bell, he then came up with the idea of applying the aforementioned "scientific method" to the detective world, creating the character of Sherlock Holmes.

Doyle's two first stories, *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of The Four* however faced a very mild reception in the two magazines they were published in. It was only when he started publishing short stories in *The Strand* that his stories started to sell. Two major factors explain this fact.

The first is the stories' innovative format. Indeed, Doyle was one of the first to think of a periodical fiction in the form of independent short stories happening within the same universe. His reasoning was that:

> . . .a single character running through a series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader, would bind that reader to that particular magazine. On the other hand, it had long seemed to me that the ordinary serial might be an impediment rather than a help to a magazine, since, sooner or later, one missed one number

> and afterwards it had lost all interest. Clearly the ideal compromise was a character which carried through, and yet instalments which were each complete in themselves, so that the purchaser was always sure that he could relish the whole contents of the magazine. (Memoirs, 95)

By having Watson enumerate cases, Doyle gives us a narration based on a character's appreciation of certain events rather than on their chronological order. This not only allows the reader to discover the Holmes canon without having to worry about missing one story[13], but also forces a certain trust in Watson's judgment as narrator.

The second is the correspondence between Doyle's target audience and the readership of *The Strand*. Indeed, the *Sherlock Holmes* canon clearly puts the upper-middle class Englishman at the centre of the stories, be it through Watson, the embodiment of the British gentleman or Holmes, the eccentric genius figure with Romantic undertones.

And in many of Doyle's stories, as Berberich points out, "traditional English, rural settings are juxtaposed with – or threatened by – an influx of foreign 'Others'" (57). Both Holmes and Watson embody English imperialism many times, outwitting the foreign characters and perpetrating some clichés such as the cannibal savage in *The Sign of the Four* or in "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge". This makes sense considering

[13] Although quite the exception, certain stories such as *The Final Problem* and *The Adventure of the Empty House* are arguably better if read in chronological order.

that Doyle was a "strong supporter of the Queen and country" (Rzepka, 120). His stories were intended for relatively well-to-do periodicals, targeting what Stephen Knight calls the "magazine-buying respectable Londoners" (CCSH, 53). Therefore, it is no surprise that he should have made Sherlock Holmes a member of the landed gentry, embodying a reassuring traditional figure of the English gentleman.

The male target audience is suggested by a close reading of the Holmes canon, where women seldom have a role to play. Except for Irene Adler and to a certain extent Violet Hunter[14], they are mostly presented as helpless victims who rely on intuition rather than on rational thinking, thereby reinforcing the duality mentioned in 1.3. One can think of Mary Sutherland in "A Case of Identity", or of Helen Stoner in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band". In "The Man with the Twisted Lip", this opposition between reason and emotion is pointed out by Holmes himself when he declares: "I have seen too much not to know that the impression of a woman may be more valuable than the conclusion of an analytical reasoner." (239). Although Holmes gives credit to women's intuitions, he nonetheless implies that they cannot be analytical reasoners. Although we must not apply a 21st century filter on this fact by inferring that this would have discouraged women to read *Sherlock Holmes*, the emphasis on everything rational as opposed to feelings throughout the whole canon can be taken as implying a male target audience.

[14] in *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*

This is confirmed by Doyle himself in the preface of *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*: "it would be true to say that those who first read of [Holmes] as young men have lived to see their own grown-up children following the same adventures in the same magazine" (Doyle, 984). Doyle here recognizes a cross-generational readership of English males as his readership, and therefore as his target audience. That is coherent if we consider that the newspaper market was largely dominated by males (Binckes, 3), although periodicals destined to women started to flourish as the result of the first wave of feminism discussed in 1.2.

It is therefore no surprise that the sixpenny magazine *The Strand* launched in December 1890 largely contributed to the popularity of the Sherlock Holmes stories, its target audience being very close to Doyle's. Firstly, it was a British magazine, aimed at English citizens from all over the world (Clarke, 31).
Secondly, it was indeed mostly male, as underlined by Pittard:

> Christopher Pittard's exploration of the *Strand* and reading communities speaks to the politics of this grouping of readers: it 'was a magazine meant to be read by the family, but bought by the man, affirming the gendered aspect of domestic economy'. (Gillis,71)

Thirdly, it was aimed at a "prosperous readership – members of the established and aspiring middle and upper-middle classes." (Clarke, 31). It was in fact aiming at reconciling the public's interest in crime while maintaining a certain decency – in other

words, avoiding political subjects as well as the melodrama characteristic of sensational literature. This combination of realism with mildly sensationalistic elements would prove a successful attempt to combine crime fiction with a certain sense of comfort in English domesticity.

One of the ways Doyle achieved this *tour-de-force* was by bringing contemporary themes in his work. Many stories can for instance be read as a testimony of England's colonial present, characterised by a certain fascination for everything exotic such as weapons, animals or jewels. One can think of *the Sign of the Four*, or of "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" as representations of the English imperialist mindset. Recent historical events such as the (then unofficial) revival of the Ku Klux Klan in "The Five Orange Pips", or the presence of the First World War in "His Last Bow" allowed Doyle to keep a certain realistic effect while avoiding a repetitive narrative.

Doyle also used popular themes such as the Gothic-influenced setting of the desolated moor in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Although the Gothic has its roots in the 18th century, the 19th century saw a resurgence of the genre ("Gothic Literature"). The moor evokes works such as Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire" is reminiscent of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).

But what contributed the most to the success is to me the character of Holmes himself. Pittard and Allan describe him as "a truly mythic figure of British culture." In the following section, I would like to analyse how the character of Holmes embodies this reassuring ideal of British culture while, through his extraordinary capacities,

remaining an outsider with whom the reader cannot fully identify, conferring him thereby his status of myth.

2.2. Holmes as fascinating myth

Fiction or reality?

To begin with, Doyle came up with the interesting idea of putting an extraordinary character in an ordinary setting. In fact, he took the concept of a realistic setting to a whole new level. Unlike Poe who was writing about Paris where, according to one of his first translators Charles Baudelaire, he had obviously never been, Doyle was writing about the city where he lived and used real names of existing places. In addition, he used descriptions of Victorian modern technology such as telegrams or gramophones. The success of the realistic effect was such that Doyle describes in his memoirs that many readers believed him to be real and addressed him letters and requests.

The reassuring logician

As seen in 1.3, the mastering of one's emotions was a quality judged by many during the Victorian era as a manifestation of manliness. Holmes, whose professional *modus operandi* have Watson qualifying him as "calculating machine", falls into this category. The fact that fear is one of the emotions unexpressed by Holmes magnifies the reassuring effect produced by this seemingly cold and rational detective.

As argued earlier, the classic whodunit is characterised by an explanation of the strange by the rational. This could be part of the explanation for Holme's success

among what the scientist David Brewster (1781-1868) called the "uneducated vision-hunting and conjuror-worshipping population" (qtd. in Henson). The triumph of the rational and material over what is at first believed by secondary characters to be supernatural could thus have been a reassuring factor for *The Strand*'s most sensitive readers.

In relation to Todorov's idea of the detective immune to danger, Holmes embodies a sort of ideal combination between superior intellect and physical strength, allowing him to defend himself and not be threatened by villains (for example in "The Adventure of the Speckled Band"). Thus, although he technically is not immune to death[15], the reader is able to have complete faith his detective abilities without really fearing for his life.

Although Holmes regularly shows distrust in the police's abilities, he does not put into question the established order. By following a well-to-do Englishman in an environment one could considered tailored for him, Doyle gives an impression of comfort while allowing readers to focus solely on the crime, providing them with a "distraction from the worries of life" (Preface to *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*, 984).

And the distraction was complete. Holmes is indeed presented as an independent man whose moral judgment can be trusted over the police. On many occasions, he proceeds to let a culprit, although technically a criminal, walk free because he considers his action to be morally justified. This is rendered possible by his superior intellect, allowing him to be a step ahead of the police. Through the eyes of

[15] Since he was not supposed to survive *the Final Problem*

Watson, the reader sympathizes with the culprit and Sherlock Holmes' intellect acts as a warrant for such a transgression.

Burrow also suggests that the success of Sherlock Holmes stories partly lays in the way Doyle gave the impression of a thorough "scientific method" while making most of the information accessible to the reader, thereby allowing them to draw their own conclusion (CCSH, 16). This relates to my personal experience as reader. Doyle even makes Watson voluntarily blind to certain things, for example in *The Red-headed League*, where the reader can with a little bit of imagination already guess that some underground work is going on. With this kind of process the mystery can be revealed in one go, while allowing the reader to feel like they have "outsmarted" Watson.

The sidekick

Scholars have identified Watson as the "embodiment of the traditional sidekick" (Saunders and Andrew, 4). This "stroke of genius" (Rzepka, 122) has played a significant role in the establishment of Sherlock Holmes as a mythical character. Indeed, by choosing this ordinary Englishman as the narrator, Doyle allowed his target audience to identify with Watson. The fact that all knowledge comes through him first therefore allows for an elevation of Sherlock Holmes' status which would not be possible had he himself been the narrator.

The trope of the less clever assistant is clearly useful in the traditional pattern of the detective fiction since it voluntarily keeps the reader in the dark, facilitating thereby the suspense until the final revelation. But in Doyle's case, the suspense goes

even further. Firstly, Saunders and Andrew argue that the depiction of Watson as relatively clever (he is after all a doctor) magnifies the exceptional abilities of Sherlock Holmes more than a "brainless" companion would have. This also enhances the "outsmarting" effect described above. Secondly, as P.D. James argues, Watson's description of Holmes is elusive and does not provide us with a clear view of what she calls "the core of the man" (11). Although Saunders and Andrew seem to understand this as something negative, arguing that Watson "fails in his purpose of providing us with clear narration" (6), I believe this contributes to the shaping of Holmes as a mythical character by keeping a part of mystery in his personality.

The glimpses we get from his personality make him appear as this unfathomable genius whose intelligence is so far from the norm that it is impossible for the reader to comprehend. However, by presenting him as a tortured genius, Doyle allows the reader to sympathize with him.

Holmes as tortured genius

The figure of the eccentric learned man completely absorbed in his subject to the detriment of his health was popularised by the Romantics. As Auden remarks, Holmes is the victim of his own melancholia, which leads Watson to worry for his health. This figure still fascinates today, and many movie characters follow this trope. Examples include (among others) Beth in the Netflix series *The Queen's Gambit* (2020), or the detective William Somerset in the thriller *Seven* (1997). These all suggest that genius (or exceptional ability) comes with its share of pain: pain of feeling different, or pain of not knowing what to do with one's abilities. The latter is the most prominent in Sherlock Holmes: Watson tells us about that "dangerous calm which [brings] more

peril to my friend than all the storms of his tempestuous life."(*The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter*, 622) If the reader might not relate to Holmes' intellect, all of his peculiar behaviours (including his depressive fits) allow for a humanisation of the character, and the reader can identify with the pain of being bored or not finding the solution to a problem.

Nancy Springer's *Enola Holmes* series not only reuses these themes but pushes the (contemporary) reader's sympathy to a further level.

3. Springer's *Enola Holmes*: a feminist approach to Holmes

In Doyle's stories, Holmes is at the centre of everything. There is no story without him, and the appeal lies in a certain stasis of his character throughout the whole canon. In Enola's world, Holmes takes on a very different role. He is both characterised by his absence as an emotional support during most of the series, and by the underlying threat he represents as a man trying to coerce his sister into boarding school. Enola entertains a double-edged relationship with him: she loves and admires him whilst fearing him.

Enola Holmes can be considered as a mix between a *Bildungsroman*, the adventure genre ("adventure") and the more classic detective story popularised by Doyle and his contemporaries. This change in style has permitted two things: a better fit for the audience (the series is intended for young adults); but also the evolution of the character of Holmes from the misogyny depicted in Doyle's books to a more comprehensive vision of the character, more appealing to a 21st century audience.

3.1. The historical context: why did it work?

In an interview for the magazine *Firstpost*, Nancy Springer answers a question about the context of creation:

> *-When and how did the idea of a character like Enola Holmes occur to you? Were there any inspirations?*
>
> No one who asks this question expects the true answer: I developed the idea in response to an editor's request. Michael Green of Philomel Books, with whom I had a long time working relationship, who was very astute about what might sell, telephoned one day and asked me to write something set in deepest, darkest London at the time of Jack the Ripper. "Actually," he said, "I'd ask you to write about Jack the Ripper, but somebody else is already doing that."
>
> I had never written historical fiction before, but I respected this editor's judgment. So I thought about other books I had done for him. *I am Mordred: A Tale of Camelot* and *I am Morgan Le Fay* – both Arthurian – and I had read lots about King Arthur and his Round Table as a child. *Rowan Hood*, daughter of Robin Hood, and I had read my mother's *Robin Hood* book when I was little. What had I read in childhood about deepest, darkest London at the time of Jack the Ripper?
>
> I had read – and reread so often I had memorised – my mother's Sir Arthur Conan Doyle collection. So – *Sherlock Holmes*? Could I give Sherlock Holmes a daughter, as I had Robin Hood? No. Absolutely not; Holmes is such a

> thoroughgoing bachelor – so I envisioned a sister for him, and somehow I knew at once that her name would be Enola. (Bhattacharya)

This honest answer provides us with two major insights as to the creative context surrounding Enola Holmes' creation. The first is the editor's request, suggesting a popular time period, and the second is Springer's personal interests as a young adult fiction writer and as a feminist. Springer's answer confirms however that "the appeal of adaptation cannot simply be explained or explained away by economic gain, however real that may be as a motive for some adapters" (Hutcheon, 175). Indeed, for a work of art to feel authentic to the audience and therefore achieve commercial success, I believe there has to be at least one element of personal motivation behind its creation. In Springer's case, the Victorian period resonated with her love for Sherlock Holmes as a child. As to her target audience, she confesses in an interview that she started writing YA fiction "without realizing it", but that the fantasy books she wrote were "a metaphor for adolescence" (Dag R.). She also mentions in an interview about *Enola Holmes and the Black Barouche* that she "[had a] feel for that age group. I'm an advocate for those people, pre-teens and teenagers, who fundamentally have no power. All the yearning, but no power to fulfil anything yet. They're still in the "longing to be grown-up" phase of their lives" (Jordan, 33:13).

This bring me to my next point, which is that I have chosen to analyse the original hexalogy without considering the latest book, *Enola Holmes and the Black Barouche*. Indeed, in this latter book, Enola is no longer in this "longing" phase of her life as she is not running away from her brothers anymore, and her mother's

whereabouts have been discovered. Moreover, this new adventure was published nearly a decade after *The Case of the Gypsy Goodbye*. The latter having clearly been originally intended as an end point for the series, the seventh book consequently stands out in its structure and many reviews (Goodreads) mention a divergence of style from the previous books, for example concerning the villain's motivation. Therefore, I would argue that this seventh book would deserve an analysis of its own[16], and will restrict my discussion to the first six books.

About feminism, Springer declares "Even though I am quite opinionated and of course my feminism shapes my books, still, I don't write to teach or preach" (*Nancy Springer on the Enola Holmes Mysteries).* Feminism and the quest for the self seem to be themes speaking to the author in general, whereas Victorianism was the product of a childhood memory combined to a monetary incentive from her editor.

Those themes have contributed to the books' success by keeping the mythical figure of Sherlock Holmes alive while modernizing it for contemporary readers. I will now examine briefly the three aforementioned themes in order to analyse their contribution to the series' success.

Neo-Victorianism

As explained by Cox, the turn of the twenty-first century saw the growth of popularity of fiction engaging with the Victorian period. She mentions the works of A.

[16] Especially as an eighth book is expected for September 2022

S. Byatt, Graham Swift or Sarah Waters as examples of award-winning neo-Victorian novels. Although critical interest in this genre dates back to the 1960s, the emergence of movements and genres such as steampunk towards the 1990s (Samida) arguably contributed to the growth of popularity of the genre and pushed editors such as Michael Green to suggest the period to their collaborators.

I find interesting to notice the distinction made by Cox between neo-Victorian and historical novels. According to her understanding, "historical fiction set in the nineteenth century (…) can be seen as merely descriptive, whereas 'neo-Victorian' writing (according to certain critical definitions) offers a more significant intellectual engagement with the period." (4)

To be more precise, Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn considered that "to be conceptualised as neo-Victorian, a text ha[s] to display a metafictional and metahistorical concern with the process of narrating/re-imagining/re-visioning histories, and ha[s] to be self-conscious about its own position as literary or filmic reconstruction."

If we take this definition, it becomes difficult to place Springer's work in one category or the other. Although she does mention the term "historical fiction" and her narrative is set in Victorian London, she also gives the reader space for some reflection about the traditions and rules of the time through the character of Enola Holmes, a 14-year-old girl with a rather liberal education[17] narrating to a contemporary reader. While some references are very explicit, some are intended for an audience familiar

[17] for Victorian standards

with the Victorian period. For example, although Springer does not use the phrase "scientific method" to refer to Enola's reasoning, she does make her a "Scientific Perditorian". This made-up profession is both a reference to Sherlock's unique status of consulting detective, which is made explicit, and a nod to the Victorian interest in science discussed earlier.

This process is providing the reader with a self-evident basis for comparison, and therefore reflection. Springer avoids confusion by adding some notes for the readers allowing them to separate historical reality from fiction, such as a note concerning Florence Nightingale in *The Case of the Cryptic Crinoline*. The only case where she maintains a voluntary blur between reality and fiction is in the case of Sherlock Holmes's character, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

This distinction between fiction and real historical events is particularly interesting if we consider the books' educational potential. The novels' original target being young adults, this has been seen by some parents (Barb) as a good introduction to Victorian England (especially for girls since the place of women is largely discussed).

Young Adult's fiction

The *Bildungsroman* or the "coming-of-age story" is a very common trope in young adult's literature. It is characterised by the evolution of an (often young) character through a series of events or ordeals which will turn out to shape him/her for the rest of his/her life. Examples would include Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1881-2), or more recently J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* (1997-2007). Talking about female

teenage fiction in particular, Nashel mentions a recurrent trope of "the search for teen girls' unhindered, unthreatened, uninhibited sense of self" (4). This is present throughout the entire Enola Holmes hexalogy, in which the quest for her mother (and for family in general) is central. The reader understands that Enola is only trying to reach freedom and that her hiding from her brothers does not please her.

Interestingly, Enola Holmes can also be perceived as a sort of *Bildungsroman* for Sherlock Holmes himself: he becomes aware of the societal constraints imposed by Victorian society on women through a series of event involving his sister. Holmes' progressive display of emotions can thus also be seen as a way for Springer to connect him to the target audience. By increasingly revealing that he cares for his sister, Enola's older brother shows a certain emotional maturity which is appreciated by the younger contemporary reader.

Another characteristic of young adult fiction is the presence of adventure. Unlike classic detective fiction, in adventure, events *happen* to the protagonist: he does not really choose to investigate them. By making Enola stumble upon her first case, Springer cleverly mixes adventure with detective work, even presenting the reader with elements belonging to the thriller genre ("thriller"). The replacement of crime with missing persons also avoids gruesome depictions of murder which would not suit the target audience.

This shift towards adventure thus translates into a distancing from the traditional detective fiction pattern as described by Todorov. However, if we take our list of rules (*cf.* 1.4) and replace the "crime" with "disappearance" concerning the first story, we can see that the shift is not very significant. Let us first examine the similar

elements. The realistic effect is here obtained by a description of Victorian London which includes even such as unglamourous and unrespectable details as "ladies of the night" and people starving in the streets. The second story is mostly linear as well, with Enola's sporadic recollection of her mother being the only shifts in time. As for the narrator, it is both intradiegetic[18] and a familiar person, to whom the target audience can relate.

Other elements are however not present in the book, or are so to a much smaller extent. For example, the rule about the reader knowing very little about the narrator clearly does not apply. The reader also fears for Enola's life and safety on many occasions, although the sheer presence of the seven books indicates that the character will not die.

I would argue that the bizarre element is still present but plays out in the way Enola manages to learn more about the mystery, which is always somehow related to the feminine world. The first-person narrative does however not allow for the "mystery effect" present in Doyle's work. Nevertheless, some elements only become clear around the climax of the narrative, which arguably still manages to retain a certain suspense for the reader. Some of the books even keep the newspaper ciphers unexplained until the end, providing the reader with a chance to take part in the investigation.

[18] Except for the prologues and epilogues

Feminism

In a 2020 interview, Springer declares "[Sherlock Holme's stories] left so much room for a really feminist character that I really couldn't believe that someone else hadn't done it before me" (Faulkner, 9:00).

And indeed, as discussed in 1.2, the books came out at a time where feminism was becoming increasingly mainstream and inclusive. *The Case of the Gypsy Good-Bye* figures on *the Amelia Bloomer Project*, an annual list of recommended feminist books, recognizing thereby Springer as a feminist writer.

For Springer, born in 1948 (ISFDB), feminism did mean something a little different than it might for her audience. For example, the fact that the books address the subject of gender roles but say nothing about race (whereas Doyle's original short stories are more than once presenting colonialist elements) is to me an argument in favour of classifying the author's feminism as "second wave".

However, the double standard regarding Enola's femininity can be considered by some as a more inclusive feminism, and therefore present third-wave elements. Indeed, Enola does embrace the codes of female Victorian society. Although in need for a disguise, she refuses to dress as a man:

> . . . [Sherlock and Mycroft] had stopped looking for me in male guise. So perhaps now it was time for me to adopt trousers?
>
> No.
>
> I simply did not want to. But more important, I had decided that, in order to find out the details concerning the disappearance of Dr. Watson, I would call

> upon Mrs. Watson, and in order to do that, I needed to be a woman. (*The Case of the Bizarre Bouquets*, 29-30)

Even though Enola clearly is rebelling against the most restrictive rules such as wearing a corset or the inheritance law, her choice of "remaining" a woman is presented as a combination between a professional and a personal choice. This can be seen as an attempt to reach a larger audience: girls who identified with the "girl power" movement as well as those rejecting all gender constructs could both enjoy the idea of a strong and independent teenager making her way in dangerous 19th century London while keeping up with Victorian fashion.

But above all, this feminist re-reading appeals the most to female readers who are familiar with the original stories. The oscillation described in 1.1 between the two works is very entertaining: while keeping the familiar setting known to the reader and adding historical details to it, Springer gives women a voice not only in a male-dominated canon, but in a genre which traditionally supplies very few female detectives in the leading role (Campbell, 12). Thanks to Enola's narration, the reader can witness a heroine outsmart the great Sherlock Holmes. Moreover, Springer cleverly avoids the clichéd theme of heterosexual romance which is too often associated with female characters in literature (McKinney). By writing about a much more universal theme of familial love, Springer reaches beyond her target audience.

All this re-writing arguably aims at showing Holmes in a new light, where he can keep his place of the "good guy". Drifting from his original one-sided opinions about women which no longer appeal to modern audiences, he becomes acceptable to a 21st century feminist readership.

We have seen why the book had a good reception in relation to the context in which it was published. I would now like to focus on the character of Holmes himself in order to understand why, despite a more emotional depiction of the character, he still retains his aura of mythical detective.

3.2. Holmes as myth: the old with the new

To begin with, in a fashion similar to Doyle's stories, Springer has built up a realistic representation of Victorian London. She plays on the fact that many people believed (and still believe) the great detective to be real rather than fictional. By making Sherlock and Enola coexist with historical characters such as Florence Nightingale or mentioning real events such as the rise of socialism in England, Nancy Springer provides her characters with a historically credible context. She declares: "[Sherlock Holmes] is the only fictional character in my experience to whom people refer as if he actually lived. People have asked me, "Did he really have a younger sister?" To which I can only reply that she's as real as he is." (Dag R.). Her elusive answer shows a certain desire to maintain that blurred line between fiction and reality which is a characteristic of *Sherlock Holmes*' success.

As we have seen earlier in the thesis, the place of the narrator plays quite an important role in *Sherlock Holmes*. By keeping an external narrator to whom the target audience can relate, Springer perpetrates the admiration for the famous detective conveyed by a third-person narrative. The fear Enola experiences is not due to her brother being particularly detestable, but to his ignorance of the conditions in which

women must live in Victorian England. Therefore, by identifying with Holmes' sister, the reader is allowed to fear him while keeping a relative high esteem of him.

This is also rendered possible by an opposition of Sherlock with Mycroft, who in Springer's books embodies the rigidity of Victorian traditions. Sherlock Holmes having always been a kind of non-conformist character, this role would arguably not have fitted him very well. In *Enola Holmes*, he is merely following Mycroft though unlike him, he tries to understand his sister.

However, although he believes himself to be acting for Enola's own good, Sherlock (along with Mycroft) ironically becomes the villain the heroine is hiding from, just as Holmes hides from Colonel Moran in "The Adventure of the Empty House". If her brothers are not directly threatening her life (although the wearing of corsets can literally threaten women's health), they are threatening her freedom, as shown in this dialogue with Mycroft:

> I raised my voice. "No. Get me a governess if you must, but I am not going to any so-called boarding school. You cannot make me go."
>
> He actually softened his tone, but said, "Yes, I can, and I shall."
>
> "What do you mean? Shall you shackle me to take me there?"
>
> . . . "Enola, legally I hold complete charge over both your mother and you. I can, if I wish, lock you in your room until you become sensible, or take whatever other measures are necessary in order to achieve that desired result. Moreover, as your older brother I bear a moral responsibility for you, and it is plain to see

> that you have run wild too long. I am perhaps only just in time to save you from a wasted life. You *will* do as I say" (*The Case of the Missing Marquess*, 69).

This very strong dialogue embodies the theme of the quest for freedom, which is a recurrent theme in coming-of-age literature. Moreover, Nashel tells about young adult fiction in particular that:

> Writers [of young adult fiction] do not want teen readers to believe that they are destined to be victims of hopelessness, powerlessness and paralysis; rather, they want them to have the hope, strength and energy to climb out of "the big box" into a world of freedom. The possibility that this enlightened world does not exist is an issue that women writers address in coming-of-age narratives intended for adult audiences (Nashel, 68).

In other words, young adult fiction must contain optimism, and this optimism is present in the book. It is started by Enola's mother who leaves her with enough money to flee on her own. But this fails to fulfil the adolescent need for affection. Right after discovering the first bank note, Enola declares: "Money was not what I wanted from my mother" before crying herself to sleep (*The Case of the Missing Marquess*, 81).

This need for affection is only fulfilled much later on, an achievement rendered possible by the evolution of Holmes' character. This evolution starts with a certain recognition of Enola's detective abilities and eventually makes him understand the absurdities of women's boarding schools, allowing him to enlighten Mycroft at the end of *The Case of the Gypsy Good-bye*. This progress is made visible through an extradiegetic shift in the narration throughout the series whereby the reader gets an insight into

Holmes' feelings towards his sister. Springer uses the character of Mycroft to acknowledge the initial unemotional nature of Sherlock's behaviour:

> No longer placid or comfortable, the stout man sits forward in his armchair, his boots (sheathed by impeccable spats) planted on the parquet floor. He demands, "Why are you so – so overridden by emotion, so affected? Why is locating our rebellious runaway sister different than any other little problem – "
>
> "Because she is our sister!"
>
> "So much younger that you have met her exactly twice in your life."
>
> The tall, hawk-faced, restless one actually stands still. "Once would have been enough." His quick, sharp voice has slowed and softened, but he does not look at his brother; rather, he appears to stare through the oak-panelled walls of the club-room to some distant place – or time. He says, "She reminds me of myself when I was that age, all nose and chin, gawky, awkward, simply not fitting in with any – " (*The Case of the Left-Handed Lady*, 3-4)

This opposition allows on one hand for the character of Sherlock Holmes to stay credible in its continuity of the original, and on the other makes his emotional outbursts even more fantastical to the reader, who is finally getting a glimpse of humanity behind Holmes' apparent disdain for everything emotional. What can appear at first as a complete turnaround contributes to make the readers feel special by giving them an insight into Sherlock's "true" personality as understood by Springer.

Moreover, as argued in 1.3, society has moved away from the dualistic vision of emotions VS reason. Therefore, presenting Holmes as a purely cold rational logician is no longer necessary for the reader to trust in his exceptional abilities. Instead, it appears rather shocking that Sherlock Holmes should be entirely deprived of empathy even for his own family. In other words, Springer's depiction humanizes him by implying that Holmes is only deprived of emotions by choice in his professional environment, an idea visible in Doyle's original work:

> "You really are an automaton,—a calculating-machine!" I cried. "There is something positively inhuman in you at times."
>
> He smiled gently. "It is of the first importance," he said, "not to allow your judgment to be biased by personal qualities. A client is to me a mere unit,—a factor in a problem. The emotional qualities are antagonistic to clear reasoning. I assure you that the most winning woman I ever knew was hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance-money, and the most repellent man of my acquaintance is a philanthropist who has spent nearly a quarter of a million upon the London poor." (*The Sign of the Four*)

The fact that Enola is not a client but his sister is therefore brought by Springer as an explanation for Sherlock emotional behaviour, and for his incapability to find her. Therefore, Springer also agrees somehow with the idea that emotions are the enemy of a person's rational judgment. This is acknowledged by Enola herself, for example when confronted to her brother's imminent arrival in *The Case of the Cryptic Crinoline*:

> ". . . I should have addressed the problem with logic, reasoning it out. I did not. I blush to admit that, simply put, I panicked. With a yelp I shot to my feet, possessing no rational plan of action, only a blind fervour to flee the premises; without a word of explanation of farewell I darted around Miss Nightingale's bed towards the door—" (95)

In this case, Enola's fear of her brother is her only motivation, and she admits having failed to think logically, recognizing the instinctive behaviour to be more dangerous than if she had given it more thought. This occurs on other occasions throughout the series, and it can be argued that Springer here wants to show that the lack of rationality goes both ways and that Enola's safety could benefit from reasoning more logically.

However, this argument requires more nuance: indeed, if Enola is an advocate of rational thinking, she also uses her own emotions and more particularly her compassion for the missing persons in order to motivate her further in the investigation. It is also emotion which saves her in the most perilous situations, such as her encounter with Alexander Finch, the villain who detains Lady Cecily:

> And in that stunned instant, gasping for breath and remembering, I learned what it meant to "see red." The night turned that hue before my eyes as wrath galvanised me so that I leapt to my feet. My dagger seemed to spring to my hand, so fiercely had I drawn it. Weapon raised, I hurtled towards the garroter.
>
> *Cruel. He has no reason to enslave her except that he likes to play with power. He had no other reason to attack me, either.* To strangle me senseless, nearly to death,

> before – although perhaps only because of a chance interruption – he had stopped to amuse himself by having a look at my face.
>
> "*Maggot*!" I cried. "You – sewer rat, you repulsive, creeping – " Confound my genteel upbringing, I could not think of any name foul enough to call that evil wretch as I plunged the knife into him.
>
> Into the swollen muscle of his upper arm. Not his heart. Even such a monster I did not care to kill. (*The Case of the Left-Handed Lady*, 212)

In conclusion, although the dichotomy between logical reasoning and instinctive emotions still operates in *Enola Holmes*, Springer presents us with a more complex vision where feelings can also help us by pushing us forward to rescue others. This change of consideration towards emotions is clearly a product of Springer's cultural context and is reflected in the way she depicts Sherlock Holmes. While keeping a certain restraint suitable to a Victorian character, rendering thereby her Holmes plausible as a continuity of Doyle's work, she makes him appear more human through showing emotions. This can be seen both as an endorsement of the value of emotions and as a desire to reach a generation of young adults more in touch with their feelings than they were before. If we examine this in the light of adaptation theories, Nancy Springer's depiction of Sherlock Holmes can be seen as the embodiment of a good adaptation, having kept enough of the original aura while presenting the contemporary reader with a more relatable character whose evolution is seen through the eyes of the heroine.

What is interesting to point out is that the Netflix adaptation of Springer's first book goes even further in the depiction of emotions in Sherlock Holmes. In order to understand the reason behind this evolution, I will continue my analysis following a similar pattern of contextualisation followed by an analysis of Sherlock's character in particular.

4. The *Enola Holmes* movie: the empathic yet distant brother

4.1. Historical context

I must begin this chapter by drawing the reader's attention to the specificities related to this medium. Indeed, as Hutcheon remarks (87), a movie is the product of a collaboration between many artists. For that reason, it becomes increasingly difficult to analyse the various external influences on its creators. Although the auteur theory considers the director as the main creative influence (Britannica), I will argue that he or she is far from being the only decision-maker. The case of *Enola Holmes* is a pretty good illustration of this phenomenon: if the film is first and foremost an adaptation of Springer's work, it is also the product of a collaboration between Millie Bobby-Brown and her older sister who had read the books in their youth, the writer Jack Thorne and the director Harry Bradbeer. But those four names are only the tip of the iceberg. As a movie with such a substantial budget is the result of the cooperation of hundreds of people, it is difficult to determine who exactly had the idea of putting a costume on an actor for example. However certain roles stand on top of the hierarchy in the making of a movie. There are called "above the line" and include:

- the various producers

-the director

-the director of photography

-the screenwriter

-the actors

("The Definitive Film Crew Hierarchy Chart").

The original movie idea came from Millie Bobby-Brown, who then found first a screenwriter and then a director (Utichi). She chose Bradbeer as executive producer, a role which often implies financial participation and which placed him along with Bobby-Brown at the top of the hierarchy concerning decision-making. Bobby-Brown and Bradbeer both having "above the line" roles (namely main actress and director) besides being producers, one can infer that their creative contribution has been signally important. Moreover, they are the ones most frequently interviewed regarding the movie. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on their visions.

Bobby-Brown being born in 2004 and Bradbeer in 1966, I see this movie as the fruit of an intergenerational collaboration. Indeed, if we refer to Utichi's interview, the historical and political details seem to have been Bradbeer's doing, while Enola Holmes' character owes a lot to Millie Bobby-Brown. As to the character of Sherlock Holmes, it is difficult to tell who was most influential here.

Though Bradbeer explains that having a history degree helped the creation process, there are a number of historical inaccuracies which are not addressed in the movie. This gives the impression of a desire to present the target audience with a

romanticized vision of Victorian London priming over the original realism achieved by both Doyle and Springer.

Victorianism in movies

This re-writing of history is part of a much bigger trend. Indeed, as mentioned by the journalist Gavia Baker-Whitelaw in an article on the subject, Hollywood has been obsessed with the Victorian period for quite some time, in relation with the popularity of neo-Victorianism in literature discussed earlier. According to her, this craze could be explained by the fact that "the nineteenth century is long enough ago that it feels like history. But, unlike the more distant past, Victorian life feels somewhat similar to our own" (8:25). Indeed, modern technology and politics retain certain characteristics already present during the Victorian era and makes it therefore more approachable than the Middle Ages for example. Moreover, the Industrial Revolution led to the mass production of books and newspapers resulting in turn in an overflow of literature from this period in comparison with earlier periods in history. This, combined to the beginnings of photography and film make the Victorian period much easier to document while rendering its aesthetics sharable to the public through primary sources.

An attempt to bring up historical facts in the movie can be noticed, for example with Enola's mom being a suffragette as well as the mention of the 1884 Reform Bill. However, they are both questionable. In fact, the former takes things further than the original book does. Indeed, in Springer's *Enola Holmes*, the mother is referred to as suffragist, which implies a non-violent feminist activism. In addition, her escape is not due to her political view but to her sickness, although a certain rebellion appears in

her wish to avoid "society's deplorable, onerous rituals of mourning" (*The Case of the Gypsy Goodbye,* 156). As to the Reform Bill, it was real but did not signify any progress concerning the social and political position of women, contrarily to what the movie suggests (Trueman).

Politics are therefore foregrounded in the movie, which may arguably be seen as an attempt to bring something new to the story while giving historical context. This does affect the character of Sherlock Holmes whose lack of a firm position regarding women's social condition is critiqued by Edith, a black woman working in a café.

If such a character can seem a little surprising to the audience accustomed to 19th century fiction, it may have reflected a part of reality. Indeed, while people of colour were barely ever mentioned in 19th century fiction, historians have shown that they were present in London society and made for a part (albeit small) of the workforce (Bressey). However, they were still a minority and Bressey seems to indicate that there were more advertisements for waiters than waitresses. Therefore, we can theorize that the existence of a character such as Edith was possible but did not reflect a norm. Yet, her teaching of jujitsu is historically inaccurate: indeed, if Edith seems to have been inspired by Edith Margaret Garrud (1872-1971), a woman famous for teaching ju-jitsu to suffragettes, the latter was not of African descent. Moreover, her acquaintance with jujitsu dates to 1899 and she started teaching it to suffragettes only around 1910 (Waldron).

This can therefore be seen as an attempt to present the audience with an attractive re-writing of the Victorian period which appeals to modern audiences. This is embodied by the character of Sherlock Holmes, who has thus evolved from the role

model with strong opinions in Doyle's stories to the indecisive brother of the movie, whose neutrality is challenged by Edith. Holmes is no longer only praised: he is also challenged and overtly criticized.

From feminism to "girlbossification"

The challenging of male authority as well as the giving much more voice to women – including women of colour- are reminiscent of third-wave feminism and suggest a desire from the movie creators to bring feminist themes into the movie. This would make sense if we consider Bradbeer's involvement in the series *Killing Eve* or *Fleabag,* both tackling the subject.

However, if we refer to the dictionary definition (*cf.* 1.2), we can see that the movie is not really a feminist one despite appearances. Indeed, instead of promoting the equality of sexes, the movie arguably gives *more* voice to women than to men. Certain elements might go unnoticed for a 21st century audience but would have been historically unthinkable. Female characters in general (Enola, Edith, Eudoria) are very blunt in the way they talk to (and about) men and defy the codes of middle-class Victorian society with very little backlash being shown in the movie. As to Enola, she acts as Tewksbury's protector or saviour, and it is even implied that she is a better detective than Sherlock Holmes, since she manages to solve the case before him. These elements were not originally present in Springer's hexalogy and are to me what the journalist Alexis Soloski refers as "girlbossification"[19] (*sic.*). In an article about

[19] The term "girlboss" is also referred to as having a similar meaning by the urban dictionary.

representation of historical feminine figures in popular culture, she declares that this phenomenon:

> nearly always puts women in competition with each other, rather than emphasizing shared struggle. It diminishes oppression and bias, suggesting that any woman can get ahead if she just puts on her big girl panties and rises-and-grinds hard enough, retconning the necessary fictions of our own cultural moment into the past (Soloski).

For example, in both Enola Holmes stories, the characters of Mycroft and Sherlock Holmes represent the white privileged male: one is quite conservative, while the other does not seem to care about women's condition. Nevertheless, the movie fails in presenting the two brothers (and especially Sherlock) as products of their time where most people still believed in women's intellectual inferiority. This alleged inferiority being at the core of Springer's plotline, one can argue that this shift in the depiction of Sherlock Holmes is a product of "girlbossification", contributing to the application of a "21st century" filter on the Victorian period.

With the final phrase "the future is up to us", the creators are encouraging women to speak out. Bobby-Brown extrapolates: "the things that you want to see change in, go and do it. This is what this film stands by" (Utichi). Although such a message is very appealing for a modern audience, we must not forget that the movie sets it in a time where women were not allowed to inherit, and much less vote.

Yet, although the movie was criticised for its "feminism for dummies" (Mason) and received an average user score of 2.6/10 on Metacritic[20], the average user grade on IMDb is 6.6/10[21] and the critics seem generally positive (Metascore of 68/100). This brings the question of the importance of historical accuracy in the eyes of the audience. I would argue that the movie bearing the labels of "Action" "Crime" and "Adventure" on IMDb shows that history was not seen as a central presence within the movie. By focusing on women's empowerment, Millie Bobby-Brown arguably provides the younger audience with a message of hope speaking to her generation.

The audience

The film's hopeful message is indeed, as we have seen earlier, a characteristic of Young Adult fiction. Another theme frequently found within this genre is the romantic interest. In fact, Nancy Springer tells in an interview that she has received numerous demands from young readers to romantically involve Enola with Tewksbury. She humorously tells the journalist that "[Enola] just doesn't want to" (Jordan, 5:35-5:50). In the movie, the romantic interest is present. However, it is very light as Enola still choses to carry on without Tewksbury at the end of the movie, and they only exchange a kiss on the hand, avoiding the sexualisation trope described by Soloski as infamously going hand in hand with the foregrounding of strong female characters.

[20] https://www.metacritic.com/movie/enola-holmes/user-reviews
[21] https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7846844/ratings/?ref_=tt_ov_rt

The tone of the movie is also much lighter than the books. For example, the movie makes no mention of the London poor who take a central place in the hexalogy, with Enola trying to be charitable to the most vulnerable. Hutcheon mentions that for a long time, Hollywood made restrictions around moving pictures much stricter than those for books (92). Although the Production Code no longer exists, ratings from the Motion Picture Association can restrict the number of viewers of a movie. One can therefore imagine that some of the book's most violent scenes such as the garroter's murderous attempt on Enola would have meant a more restrictive rating than the current PG-13 and would have thus affected its commercial success.

Another thing that struck me was the fact that the movie provides us with some kind of resolution of all three plots present in the story (Enola solving the case, Enola finding her mother and Enola finding herself). In the books, the two latter only happen towards the end of the sixth book. This condensation of the Bildungsroman process can be explained by the economical constraints linked to a movie production as opposed to a book: if an author can already plan a hexalogy and wait for the success of the first book to publish the others, the costs involved in the production of a movie make things different. This is what Bradbury refers to as the "meter", comparing TV production with a taxi ride (Hutcheon, 87). It seems therefore logical to first make a movie which can stand on its own.

From detective to adventure: a shift

As Hutcheon remarks, one of the qualities of a good adaptation is to manage to bring some new elements to the adaptation. In this case, this means a shift further away from the whodunit pattern (*cf.* 1.4.). Springer having kept the idea of an initial situation resulting in some form of investigation, it leaves some space to the reader to try and figure out what could have happened to the various kidnapped or missing characters. In the movie, however, this is replaced with a much more high-paced action, with the man in the bowler hat chasing Tewksbury as the starting point for the investigation. This higher pace could be explained by the change of medium as well as this very medium's evolution. Indeed, movies have grown towards a faster pace, meaning an increase of cuts, a reduced duration of those cuts and a general acceleration of what Pearlman calls "the rate of movement or events over the course of the whole film" (Cutting).

The suspense elements formed a solid basis in the pattern of Doyle's short stories and became a major feature in detective fiction. As we have seen, Springer's mode of narration does not allow for the readers to be kept in the dark as much, involving them in Enola's thought process. The movie continues with this shift by giving clues one by one as an explanation for Enola's actions within the scenario. If we examine our aforementioned list of rules, we can notice an increase in the shift away from Doyle's story's pattern.

Indeed, if the narrator is still intradiegetic and a familiar person to the audience, all of the other rules are either questionable or not valid. Among the former, we can find the rule concerning the "mystery effect". Indeed, we learn around the middle of the movie what Enola's mother is up to and how Enola discovers it is no mystery.

However, her appearance towards the end could make her location a "major element" of the first story. As to the realistic effect, I would argue here that the neo-Victorian setting makes it difficult for a young audience to relate with, whereas the historical inaccuracies hinder the familiar effect for those accustomed to the period.

Among the rules which do not apply, the movie follows Springer's decision to make the narrator's thoughts and personality central to the story. Another difference concerns the bizarre element in the plot's initial exposition phase, which is later explained by the detective. The chase with the man in the bowler hat might at first seem inexplicable, but it remains is a common trope in the adventure or thriller genre. As to Tewksbury's attempted murder, Enola discovers it only later in the movie and it is not what decides her to take action. At last, the audience can notice many flashbacks in the movie. One could argue that this process is much more common in movies than they are in literature. It nonetheless makes the mother significantly more "present" than in the hexalogy.

4.2. Sherlock Holmes

Sherlock Holmes in the movie is still presented as a character worthy of admiration. This is visible from its introduction from Enola as "my genius brother" (*EH*, 00:05:15). This third-person narrative where Enola directly addresses the audience reminds us of *Fleabag* while maintaining the idea of Holmes as seen through the eyes of a third character. Watson is however completely absent in the movie, replaced by Lestrade as Holmes' closest colleague.

What struck me first when watching the movie was the fact that Sherlock Holmes was no longer presented as trying to master his emotions. To illustrate my point, I would like to compare two moments of dialogue, respectively from Springer's series and from the movie. The first is a conversation between Dr Watson and Enola, disguised as the secretary of Dr Ragostin, her fictitious employer. Watson describes Holmes with these words:

> . . . It has not escaped my notice, however, that since this past summer he has seemed uneasy in his mind, and over the past few months positively distraught, to the extent that he is not eating properly, nor sleeping, and I have become concerned for him not only as a friend but as a physician. He has lost weight, his colour is unhealthy, and he has grown quite melancholy and irritable."
>
> Busily noting down all this for "Dr. Ragostin", I was able to keep my head lowered over my desk so that Dr. Watson would not see my face. A good thing, for I am sure dismay showed; tears formed in my eyes. My brother, paragon of the coldly logical mind, distraught? Unable to eat or sleep? I had no idea that he was capable of such depth of feeling. Least of all about me.
>
> Dr. Watson went on. "Although I have asked him repeatedly what is troubling him so, he denies being in any difficulty, and when yesterday I persisted in questioning him, he flew into such a temper, so out of keeping with his usual steely self-control, indeed so irrational, that I felt I must act upon my concerns whether he liked it or not, for his own sake. (*The Case of the Left-handed Lady,* 13)

In this scene, Sherlock's reluctance to show emotions is shown not only by the fact that he refuses to talk to his friend Watson, but also through Enola herself who is quite astonished at the idea of her brother being emotionally distressed. Sherlock's cold behaviour towards his sister could thus partly be explained by the Victorian standard of masculinity (*cf.* 1.3.)

In the movie, Sherlock is presented as quite different. In this second extract, he is indeed both protecting Enola from Mycroft by concealing information from him, and directly expressing his concern for his sister, as visible in this dialogue between Enola and Sherlock:

ENOLA. Will you stop her?

SHERLOCK. I don't get involved in politics.

ENOLA. Or people, either, unless they're clues. Did you help Mycroft catch me ?

SHERLOCK. No.

ENOLA. But you found out about the money. You told him.

SHERLOCK. You disappeared. We had to know how far you would run.

ENOLA. I'm just a case to you, aren't I? A curiosity. Is that why you're here, to pick my brains?

SHERLOCK. No.

ENOLA. Or possibly you're feeling guilty.

SHERLOCK. I'm here because I care for you.

> ENOLA. You're being emotional. It's understandable but unnecessary (*EH*, 1:24:30 -1:25:00).

Enola is here using Sherlock's words against him. Indeed, this last line was uttered by Sherlock to Enola earlier in the movie. This shows a shift in Sherlock's behaviour, which is explained by a growing empathy towards his sister and her detective skills. However, I would argue that such words seem highly unlikely for Doyle's Sherlock Holmes who is as we have seen presented as the embodiment of detached reasoning to whom emotions are "abhorrent" (*A Scandal in Bohemia*, 161). It also seems rather a stretch from Springer's Holmes, whose affection is never shown in such a direct and open manner despite an evolution in the way he considers his sister. In an article about the movie, Sandy Schaefer declares that:

> Seeing as *Enola Holmes* is told from Enola's perspective (she even breaks the fourth wall to address the audience directly at times during the film), it makes sense for the movie to portray Sherlock in a more empathetic light than adaptations past. While others might have a harder time looking past Sherlock's antisocial tendencies, to Enola he's merely her older brother and the more affectionate of her crime-solving siblings.

However, even if we only refer to Springer's books in which Sherlock Holmes is more empathic than in the original stories, we can see that this empathy is not something innate for him. Although the fact that Enola is related to him plays a role in the "irrational" way he deals with her case, the term "affectionate" seems to me a little far-fetched, even in relation to Mycroft.

The movie further links Holmes' emotional reaction to the way he understands the situation. In the books, we can see that Sherlock truly fails to understand the reason behind Enola's constant running away from both Mycroft and himself (*The Case of the Cryptic Crinoline*, 155). This ignorance bolsters the idea of the Victorian division of men and women's roles into "two separate spheres" (K. Hughes) and explains the contradictory behaviour of Sherlock, both recognizing in his sister something of himself and trying to coerce her into what he thinks is best for her. It is indeed very clear in the books that Sherlock is on Mycroft's side concerning Enola's education. In fact, at the end of the second book, he declares to her that "every decent woman's calling is to take her proper place in society" (*The Case of the Left-handed Lady*, 223). Only at the end of the fourth book does he become enlightened by Miss Nightingale about the literal dangers of a life in boarding school.

In the movie, however, the character of Sherlock presents us with some much deeper contradictions. Indeed, although he does appear haughty and distant at the very beginning of the movie, he rapidly shows an understanding of Enola's capacities, telling Mycroft that Enola "seems intelligent" (*EH*, 00:12:50-00:13:00). This is a huge contrast with the first book, where he declares: "the girl's head, you'll observe, is rather small in proportion to her remarkably tall body" (*The Case of the Missing Marquess*, 38) or "pity the girl's cranial capacity, Mycroft" (ibid., 49). This idea supports a consequent part of the plot in the book where Enola runs away from her two brothers. Indeed, Springer uses the Victorian middle class male's absence of interest in (or lack of knowledge of) the feminine condition to explain the fact that a fourteen-year-old is able to outsmart "the two best thinkers in England" (ibid., 43).

Sherlock Holmes in the movie takes up a very different stance on his sister's education. First of all, Miss Harrison's finishing school for young ladies is not presented as something more dangerous than a strict school. Enola's refusal to cooperate can therefore be seen as a mere adolescent rebellion against authority rather than the health concern resulting of her knowledge of such establishments presented in the books (*The Case of the Missing Marquess*, 66-67). Second, Sherlock knows that Enola is clever, and they are to a certain extent joining efforts in the quest for their mother. I would argue that, the underestimation of his sister not having been kept by the movie creators, Enola's solving of the Tewksbury case before Sherlock strips him of his original aura by discrediting his abilities as a detective.

Sherlock's attitude towards his sister is also dubious. Although he knows that such a school does not make Enola happy, he does close to nothing to prevent it from happening. If we consider that he thinks the school to be in Enola's best interest, the fact that he conceals information from Mycroft becomes illogical. Indeed, this sort of behaviour paired with his displays of compassion for his sister seem to indicate that he is on her side. But instead of helping her in a concrete manner, he visits her at the school and gives her compliments and advice from afar, telling her she has "become quite the detective" and even encouraging her to pursue her investigation by saying "sometimes you must dangle your feet in the water in order to attract the sharks" (*EH*, 1:25:00-1:30:00).

This could be seen as an attempt to show that Enola does not need any man (including Sherlock) to be saved from a life of domestic duties. To this idea, two objections arise: First, the audience familiar with Springer's books will wonder why

the original plot where she manages to escape her brothers on her own has not been kept, since it provides us with strong female character independent from any male. Second, the fact that Sherlock asks for Enola to become his ward at the end of the movie seems to contradict this idea.

This portrayal of Sherlock Holmes as an empathic accomplice of Enola is to me quite interesting, since it constitutes a major shift from the original canon. The motivations behind such a change in the famous detective's expression of emotions can thus be explain by a number of factors besides the external influences described in the first sub-part. For example, Millie Bobby-Brown's desire to create a strong female character might have influenced the creation of a Sherlock Holmes who would not overshadow Enola. Another motivation could be to side-step depicting him as an antagonistic character whom Enola has to fear. Anyway, this image of an empathic hero seems to have fitted with the creator's vision and, to a certain extent, the public's expectations.

Conclusion

Our investigation into the world of adaptations has shown them to be both subjective and objective at the same time. The case of *Enola Holmes* and its film adaptation is particularly interesting given the differences in historical contexts surrounding their creation. The way women were considered varies widely between Doyle's, Springer's and Bobby Brown's respective generations. Springer brought women to the forefront of her stories while keeping their lifestyle within the boundaries of Victorian London,

where feminist activism was just emerging and was far from being the norm. The movie's attempt to modernize feminist ideas has resulted in the introduction of political activism, as well as in the "girlbossification" phenomenon described earlier. I believe this change to have been influenced both by the public's increasing interest in strong female lead characters and by a growth of political awareness in young people. Certain contemporary issues such as intersectionality are interestingly brought up, bringing a modern ambience to the movie despite its Victorian setting.

Concerning the character of Sherlock Holmes, his shift towards a more emotional character can be explained by a number of factors. First, as we have seen, emotions are nowadays understood in a way that is considerably different from Doyle's time. Whereas emotions would arguably have rendered Holmes unconvincing as a detective to the 19th century reader, they manage to humanise him in both Springer's books and in the movie. Second, the change in target audience alters matters, as emotions are arguably more likely to be appreciated by younger readers. Third, the nature of the detective fiction, and thereby of its main protagonist has drifted towards faster-paced storytelling, particularly in movies. The image of the "scientific" detective solving crimes from the comfort of his home has become a rather outdated model. Instead, the new detectives belong to a marginalized social group, transgress the established norms and actively risk their lives, both showing emotions themselves and arousing them in the reader.

To conclude, I argue that the heightening of emotions in Sherlock Holmes is above all the consequence of an alteration of the gender-based expectations concerning emotional behaviour, and can be read as an attempt to modernize the character.

Ironically, this relegates Holmes to the status of sidekick in both *Enola Holmes* stories, and more especially in the movie where he does not play an active role in the investigation. The evolution of Sherlock Holmes' character is thus here the reflection of a shift in mentalities, consigning the formerly praised white male to the background.

While I would argue that the movie's modernisation has resulted in too major a shift in the character for him to still be considered a convincing Sherlock Holmes, the public's mitigated opinion shows that Holmes' "aura" might not be the same for everyone. After all, as Neil McCaw argues, the Holmes canon has been adapted so many times that every aspect of it becomes negotiable (CCSH, 210). Holmes was and remains a product of a collective imaginary comprised of so many layers that the fidelity to its original source is no longer a necessary constituent for its success with the public.

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